Red Chrysanthemums

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Red Chrysanthemums

by kookaburrito

Summary

Will is injured and has to stay at home to recover. Hannibal takes care of him. Featuring fluff, confessions, sex, flowers, and dangerous discoveries.

Notes

Hi, I'm from Ukraine! As you probably know, these past 11 months have been a living nightmare for Ukrainians. But we're trying to stay strong. November and December were awful, because russians are specifically destroying our energetic infrastructure, and that meant constant blackouts.

During particularly harsh blackouts, one of the ways for me to stay sane was to download fics when I had electricity and then read them when the power was out. I got really into Hannigram, particularly the fics of the brilliant @Shotgun_sinner. I feel like I'm a way less skilled AI robot that has read all of her works multiple times, and then just had to produce my own feeble imitation. If you see lots of similarities, it's because her headcanons are so ingrained in my brain they became literal canon for me. Please go and read her fics, and comment, and give her love, cause everything she writes is absolutely brilliant.

Anyway, it's been a while since I attempted a bigger fic, and I hope you like it, and it manages to bring some comfort and escape from the demons that plague your living days. It's certainly helped me concentrate on something other than the war. (Btw I'm not saying all this for you to pity me. Just stating facts, and telling you the weird story of how after 10 years since Hannibal aired, I suddenly became Hannibal trash and wrote a 30k fic in a month).

P.S. Also Will sleeps a lot. Probably cause I'm tired as fuck too. Just putting the fictional comfort blorbo to sleep as if that somehow can lessen my own exhaustion. We've all done it, right?

Aperitivo

Will woke up from a restless sleep. Anxiety clawed at him almost immediately. Something was not right. He tried to focus, as the remnants of the dream seeped away.

An unfamiliar smell.

It took him a moment to place it, and his mouth watered when he did. Sizzling garlic and onion, a mix of aromatic spices. Someone was cooking in his kitchen.

He tried to get up, but a piercing pain went through his arm, and forced him to lie down again. Hazy memories of the last few days started rushing back. The killer's grin, the loud gunshots, falling in the dirt, hot blood spilling from the fresh shoulder wound. Paramedics, sirens, the sterile smell of the room at the hospital, visitors in between nightmares. Jack, demanding facts, Alana, demanding symptoms. Hannibal, demanding nothing. Just offering food and comfort.

Hannibal.

Of course. That explained the smell.

Will felt a sense of relief wash over him.

He remembered now — it was Hannibal who brought him home last night. Will was to stay in bed for another week, take medication, stop stressing, and concentrate on getting better. And most importantly, *not* think about the case.

As he struggled to get up, he remembered Doctor Kim's instruction to move his arm as little as possible. It took him quite some time to get out of bed, and a great deal of balance to clasp on the sling and wear his pajama pants. He didn't want to appear in front of Hannibal in only his boxers.

Putting on his white cotton t-shirt one-handed seemed like too much of a challenging task. Suddenly he saw it — a red robe that he clearly didn't own — neatly folded on his chair. Will stared at it in surprise. Then touched it, marveling at the softness of the material. He managed to shuffle it on, almost groaning at how pleasant it felt against his bare skin. Hannibal knew comfort.

He walked into the kitchen, aware that his chest was a bit visible in the V-neck of the robe. Hannibal noticed him immediately, and Will was glad that he didn't have to look at the scene in front of him for too long. Because Hannibal was there, dressed to the nines with his sleeves rolled up, in a white apron, cooking something no doubt extremely over the top for Will's shabby kitchen. There were also foreign objects all around the space — some coffee-related stuff, a large wooden chopping board, paper bags with groceries, a bouquet of red chrysanthemums that made Will's brain go in tilt. Will would never even think of purchasing fresh flowers (where did Hannibal get that vase? He hasn't seen it in years). It was all too overwhelming to take in.

“Will. Breakfast is almost ready,” Hannibal looked at him over his shoulder, gaze soft, eyes traveling up and down Will’s body.

“Uh… I’ll… Go wash up,” Will’s voice was too rough from sleep. In moments like these, words of gratitude always seemed stuck in his throat.

As he washed his face and brushed his teeth, he recalled last week, spent in the hospital, and how he hated every moment of it. Will was going insane there — being under constant surveillance and on a strict regime, not sleeping well, not seeing his dogs or being able to go into nature, eating food that tasted like air. Hannibal’s presence and the home cooked meals that he occasionally brought along made it slightly bearable. Will almost considered physical harm to make Doctor Kim release him earlier. She finally did so, making Will promise he would take medication, relax, and eat well. Will didn’t think Hannibal making him breakfast also came with the deal.

The smell of freshly cooked breakfast teased him all the way from the kitchen, as he tried to brush his teeth with his left hand and splash some water on his face. He looked at himself for quite some time, debating whether it was alright to spend time with Hannibal looking so disheveled. Not that it should’ve mattered, they were in Will’s home after all, but suddenly he didn’t know how to act. Hannibal being there in his home felt strange, but not unwelcome.

He tried not to look at Hannibal as he walked into the kitchen, robe tightly wrapped around his middle. As he finally sat behind the table, his eyes were immediately drawn to how beautiful the food looked, just as mouth-watering as the smell. Sausage and hashbrown, plus some sort of seemingly delicious sauce, arranged with fresh herbs into a stunning composition. Entirely unnecessary, yet Will couldn’t help but feel pleased as he eyed at the plate in front of him.

Unceremoniously, Will dug in. He might’ve moaned out loud at the first bite, but he was too famished to care, and he knew that Hannibal valued having his meals enjoyed. Will’s genuine appreciation seemed to beat his rudeness that in others Hannibal found unacceptable.

“You made me breakfast,” he said half-way through the meal. It wasn't a question, but a statement, because Will didn’t know what else to say.

“Hash brown made with yukon gold potatoes, and roasted chorizo in oregano and butter. With sour cream sauce. How are you feeling?”

“Strange. Unusual to be so well-rested,” sleeping was generally not a restful pastime for Will at all, rather a battle with nightmares. “How long have I been out?” he asked, the first delicious mouthful of coffee already making its way into his stomach. The coffee was indeed better than the one Will usually made, and he was glad Hannibal made the effort to bring ground coffee beans and his own equipment.

“Almost 18 hours. Your body needed rest. Clearly, you weren’t getting it at the hospital,” Hannibal was cutting up the chorizo using both fork and knife, as Winston looked at him expectantly from under the table, wagging his tail.

Will wanted to ask if Hannibal was here the entire time, through the night. They were having late breakfast with a vase of crimson-red flowers on the table, and yet somehow the question seemed too forward.

“So why are you here again?” Will blurted out.

Hannibal cast Will a disapproving glance.

“Is that a way to speak to your caretaker?”

Caretaker. The word made something warm unfurl in Will’s belly. He couldn’t remember the last time he had a caretaker. His father surely wasn’t one. There was certainly as little *care* involved in their relationship as possible.

“Uh, sorry. What I meant was,” Will cleared his throat. “Don’t you have somewhere to be?”

“I am taking care of you until you get better. You need not concern yourself with anything else.”

Will felt his neck heat up. He tried to eat the rest of it in silence, focusing on the taste and genuinely enjoying every bite. The right arm was fixed in his sling, so he was using his left hand, but it felt too awkward. Bringing his fork up to his mouth was more and more tiring each time.

After a few failed attempts, Hannibal, without a word, took Will’s fork and pierced a piece of chorizo, then brought it to Will’s lips.

“This is humiliating,” Will murmured, but he couldn’t stop looking into Hannibal’s eyes. He swallowed the bite down, desperately hoping to look normal as he did.

“It doesn’t have to be,” the tiniest of smirks graced Hannibal’s face. He continued feeding Will, and gave the odd bite to Winston. Will tried very hard not to make a connection.

They ate in silence, Will conscious of Hannibal’s presence all around him, but finding it strangely appealing. He always enjoyed being alone, but somehow a breakfast like this was something he could get used to. Not that he had to get used to it, Hannibal was only taking care of him for… today? A few days? He didn’t know.

“Thank you. It was delicious,” Will finally said when their plates were empty, and caught Hannibal’s pleased smile, “Let me clean up.”

“Nonsense. I’ll take care of it,” Hannibal was already up, and a firm hand landed on Will’s good shoulder for a second.

Will watched him move around his kitchen with grace, putting the dishes away with an area of such familiarity that it seemed like he’s been there countless times before.

“Shall we have fruit on the veranda? The dogs probably want to stretch their legs too,” Hannibal asked.

Will nodded. He tucked the robe as tight as he could against his chest. As he went for the door, Hannibal stopped him. He reached for his bag and fished out a warm checkered blanket, and draped it around Will's shoulders.

The small gesture was enough for Will's heart to swell with affection. He was too caught up in the moment, almost staring at Hannibal, but thankfully the dogs ran out in the yard, providing a distraction.

Will settled on the chair out on the veranda without a word, snuggling into both the robe and the much-needed blanket for this chilly September day. He concentrated on absorbing the scene in front of him with all his senses, inhaled the crisp autumn air tinted with the smell of pinewood, watched the dogs play and the golden light seep through the trees, so much so that moments later he was startled to find Hannibal sitting beside him, their coffee and a platter of exquisitely carved fruit carefully placed between them on the table.

"You don't have to do this," Will said, shame and gratitude both filling him up to the brim.

"I don't," Hannibal smiled at him, the bastard, and took a piece of apple in his mouth.

* * *

It was nice to just sit on his veranda and look at the dogs. Josie was chasing Winston around the lawn, play-fighting. Max inspected the tree for squirrels. Freya and Apollo were taking turns peeing in the bushes and sniffing the territory.

How long has it been since Will just took a day off? A day without staring at corpses or teaching about corpses, or analyzing photos of corpses. A day that he could spend doing normal stuff. He couldn't tell.

It was even nicer to share this peaceful state with someone else. In silence, yet aware of the company. Hannibal watched the dogs carefully, and he didn't seem bored. Will was glad his dogs liked Hannibal, but it was expected what with the amount of treats he always brought them.

Will started talking about them, almost unconsciously. He told Hannibal how he found Winston in the street. About Freya's stomach problems, and that Max was an old dog now that couldn't run too fast. He talked, and Hannibal listened attentively, asked questions.

"Sorry," Will said, suddenly realizing in the middle of a story about Josie's underbite, how boring it must've been to listen to all this. Hannibal didn't seem like an animal person.

"Why are you sorry? I like hearing about your dogs. Plus, it will help me take better care of them, should you be away again."

Hannibal said it with such ease that Will was stunned into silence. Usually he asked Alana to take care of his dogs. This time Hannibal took care of them, and now Hannibal said he'd take them again, like it was expected of him.

Will needed a moment, so he busied himself with the coffee.

“Would you mind throwing some sticks for them to play later? There are some under the porch. My arm…”

Hannibal put down his coffee. Will didn’t even have to say ‘please’, and all of this immediate attention to his requests was going to Will’s head.

The dogs ran back to the house as they noticed Hannibal holding the sticks. Will watched Hannibal’s broad back as he threw sticks through the lawn, almost to the woods. Suddenly, his phone vibrated with a call, and Will almost wanted to ignore it in favor of appreciating the view. Beverly’s name flashed on the screen.

“Hey, you alive?”

“Surprisingly, yes.”

“Need anything? I could bring some food. But I don’t really cook, so it would have to be Taco Bell.”

“Uhm,” Will debated not telling her, but then, if she found out, it would be even more awkward. “I’m good. Doctor Lecter is here. He’s taking care of it.”

“*It*? What’s *it*? Don’t you mean, you?”

“Sort of,” he really didn’t want to go into the details, but Beverly probably sensed all the things he wasn’t mentioning to her. She has always been the most perceptive one of the team.

“Okay, then. Glad Doctor Hotass is there, taking care of *it*,” she said, with an emphasis on the pronoun, and Will’s face heated up, “So, Will. How much do you remember about what happened?”

Will groaned. “Didn’t they tell you not to talk to me about the case?”

“Sure, sure. But I just wanted to remind you. That Campbell guy, he’s on the loose. So please be careful. I know you wanted to go home already, but that puts you at risk. We’re keeping an eye on all his suspected locations, but you never know.”

A chill ran down Will’s spine. For a millisecond, he thought he saw a shadow of a stag right near the woods. He squinted, but suddenly it wasn’t there. He cleared his throat.

“Gee, well, thanks for the call, Bev.”

“Hey, I’m worried about you. Did Jack call?

“No. So I guess there hasn’t been any news.”

Will suddenly caught on the fact that Jack didn’t call just to check up on him, either.

“Not really, no. I’ll keep you updated.”

“Please don’t.”

“Alright, have fun with your doctor then. Heal faster. Bye,” Beverly hung up, before he could say anything in his defense.

Not long after the call, Will felt tired again. He waved at Hannibal that he was going inside, and went straight to the bed, laid back on the pillows.

He wanted to make an effort and change into pajamas, because he knew Hannibal would appreciate it. He was too tired to think what that meant, and why did he care if Hannibal appreciated it. All he managed to do was shuck off the robe and take off the sling.

He didn’t know how much time had passed when Hannibal came into the living room, and put a glass of water on his bedside.

“Sorry, I just…”

“No need to apologize,” Hannibal put a hand on his forehead, presumably to check the temperature. His hand was a bit cold, but it felt really nice. “Sleep, Will.”

Will dreamed of a stag in the woods, watching him closely.

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When he woke up from the nap, the blood-red sunset light was seeping through the curtains. Hannibal was reading a heavy leather tome, lounging in the armchair by the bed. His hair was practically glowing, backlit by sunlight, and his face was hidden in the shadows. For some reason, he looked absolutely entrancing.

Will let himself look at him for a second. It felt like he was seeing him for the first time. Maybe it was, in a sense. He couldn’t stop staring. He wanted to commit the image of him to memory, so he could remember the way Hannibal looked even years from now. At that moment, he doubted they could continue therapy.

Winston walked into the room, and went straight to Hannibal, started licking his hand. Will saw the way Hannibal’s face lit up at Winston’s attention. He took a piece of meat from a handkerchief on the small table and fed it to Winston, stroking him gently. And then he noticed Will’s gaze.

“Sleep well?”

“You’re still here,” Will said, voice and mind hazy.

“Why are you so surprised?”

“Guess no one ever bothered,” Will said, suddenly realizing how dry his throat felt. He pushed himself on his good elbow to reach the glass of water on the nightstand and gulp it down.

“I’m going to be here, as long as you need me.”

Hannibal's words were always bold and to the point, and Will felt deeply affected by them, his body suddenly boneless. He didn't know what to do with himself when Hannibal said things like that.

Once again he couldn't help but inhale Hannibal's scent, so different from the smells of his home, rich and fresh. His own body was stinking, he didn't remember the last time he showered properly.

"I need to take a shower. But I can't…" Will gestured to his shoulder, helpless.

"Might be easier to take a bath," Hannibal said, without missing a beat, "I will run you one upstairs."

"Thank you."

As the bath was filling up, Will found some clean clothes. He opted out of the sling, as it would only be in the way. But he took the robe, as it felt comforting to the touch. He probably should've thanked Hannibal for it, but was too embarrassed to say anything.

He went into the bathroom, and saw Hannibal with his sleeves rolled up, testing the temperature of the water. Another small gesture, just like with the blanket after breakfast, and Will wondered if he will ever get used to such genuine care.

Hannibal straightened up.

"Do you need my assistance with anything?"

He looked up at Hannibal, not knowing how to find the words. What kind of assistance was he offering? Undressing Will? Washing him? Will's breath hitched in his throat

Hannibal looked unfazed. He was towering over Will, composed and calm as always. Will couldn't pick up any underlying emotions at all. He didn't remember the last time he felt so vulnerable and exposed. But it wasn't a bad feeling.

"N-no, no. It won't be necessary," Will said finally, voice a bit breathless. He blamed it on his condition.

"I'll leave you to it. I will make us some dinner in the meantime."

Will let out a deep breath when the door closed behind him.

And although Will struggled with undressing and getting in the bath, he was glad Hannibal wasn't there to witness his disheveled state and flushed skin.

He stayed in the bath long enough for his fingertips to wrinkle and for the water to get uncomfortably tepid.

At one point, he ended up holding his half-interested cock in hand, giving it a tug. He thought about sleeping with men before, but it was mostly in abstract terms, never a face to the

thought. But Hannibal… Hannibal felt different. He felt different from most people Will knew.

Unconsciously, Will recalled Hannibal's soft touch, his warm features. A few more gentle strokes, barely caresses really, with the water making everything a bit more unreal. Hannibal had a really nice body, and Will suddenly realized he particularly liked how his arms looked, when he rolled up the sleeves of his shirt. His pants have always fitted perfectly. He was always clean-shaven and took particular care of his nails. Always composed.

Will wondered how he'd look like flustered, in the midst of sex. Would he blush? Or swear? He must look gorgeous naked. Will stroked himself more firmly, imagining Hannibal's naked chest and the crease of his hipbones, and… But the left hand made the whole process a bit unfamiliar. His cock was way too interested, but strangely he just couldn't bring himself to really finish himself off. No one ever had to know, and yet shame swirled in his gut. Blushing even more fiercely, he thought that if he were to go through with it, Hannibal might be able to smell the result of it on him. He couldn't decide whether he wanted it or not.

There was a sudden noise from the kitchen downstairs, where Hannibal was cooking them another no doubt extremely elaborate dinner. He swore and let go of his cock. What was he doing? It wasn't appropriate to think of his *caretaker* like that.

* * *

With great difficulty, Will managed to clean his hair with one hand, rinse it off, get out of the bath and dry himself. Then he put on a long-sleeved shirt, fresh pajama pants, as well as the robe. The nap energized him, and the bath made him feel much better.
Whatever his motives were, Will was glad for Hannibal's presence. Maybe it was Jack's reprimand to keep Will healthy, or Alana's concerns. Somehow, thinking that Hannibal was there out of his own desire was difficult to accept, but dinner was waiting for Will in the kitchen, and Will's defenses were slowly crumbling. Shame and pleasure twisted in his stomach at the thought that Hannibal was in his home because he genuinely wanted to take care of him, and nothing else.

"Smells delicious," he said, walking in the kitchen area to find their dinner already plated. It was dark outside, and Hannibal lit up some candles. The dogs were all snuggled up in their beds. The kitchen looked more cozy than it ever did during all of the years that Will lived there.

"Let's hope you enjoy the taste of it as well. It's rabbit stew with a vegetable salad," Hannibal said. "Feel better after your bath?"

"Yeah," Will said, sitting down at the table, "But my beard is getting a bit longer than I'm used to. I will have to go to a barber or something, since I can't shave it myself yet."

"I can shave you, if you want," Hannibal said.

"Hannibal, really…"

"I wouldn't offer it if it were a burden."

“No,” Will said, suddenly overwhelmed. It resonated in the kitchen like shattered glass. He immediately regretted it.

He wondered if his behavior throughout the day was rude. Will was used to dealing with blunt and demanding people, he was used to speaking his mind honestly, to get to the point when he needed to. He had no clue how to respond to softness and attention.

He stared at the plates of delicious food that Hannibal prepared, at the warm and inviting set up of the kitchen, felt the soft material of the robe against his skin, and gathered his thoughts.

With immense difficulty, he cleared his throat.

“Sorry, I’m actually. Uhm. Glad. You’re here, I mean,” he said incoherently but honestly, looking at the flowers in the vase, unable to meet Hannibal’s eyes all of a sudden, “I’m just not used to such attention. It’s a bit too much. But I really appreciate it.”

He wondered briefly what the flowers meant. He knew that Hannibal never did anything without meaning. His centerpiece flower arrangements during fancy dinners always had special meanings, as Hannibal was fluent in the language of flowers. Will was too much of a coward to ask him what this bouquet of red chrysanthemums meant, he was afraid the answer would overwhelm him.

“My pleasure,” a half-smile on Hannibal’s face. “Shall we eat? The rabbit is getting cold.”

The domesticity of it made Will breathless. Hannibal’s cutlery, the fancy napkins on Will’s old wooden table. Will never shared Wolf Trap’s house with anyone before. He got this place mainly for the isolation and the closeness to nature. It allowed him to fish all year round, and there were no neighbors and unwanted chatter. It was so strange to have Hannibal here, of all people, looking like he belonged.

“Would you like me to feed you?” Hannibal asked, and Will almost choked on a piece of meat.

“Uh, I’ll try to manage. I feel stronger already. It’s just a bit awkward using my left hand for everything.”

“Using your non-dominant hand increases cognitive abilities,” Hannibal said.

Will’s mind wandered to the bath upstairs, and he tried really hard to block out the mental image of what he attempted to do in there with his *non-dominant hand*. His ears turned red, as he wondered if Hannibal could read his thoughts.

To distract himself, Will took a bite of the meat, and closed his eyes from the pure tasty bliss. Hannibal poured them both some water.

“Hope this rabbit lived a good life,” Will said, taking another bite.

“It served its purpose. To feed us and keep our bellies full, or hearts satisfied.”

“The same thing the Chesapeake Ripper might say about humans.”

“Will,” Hannibal sighed.

“Yeah, I know, don’t think about the cases.”

“I can’t forbid you to think about cases. But you really should rest. You had a traumatic week.”

“Sometimes I feel like… I understand him. All too well,” Will murmured, and he wasn’t sure if it was Hannibal’s psychologically comfortable energy or the silence, or his lingering tiredness loosening up his tongue. “And he needs to be understood. It’s a basic human need.”

“Understood or accepted?”

“There is no acceptance without full understanding. Not that I have encountered much of either in my life.”

“It saddens me, you should say it. I would accept even the darkest parts of you.” Hannibal said, staring at him, unblinking, and Will felt his whole body fill with warmth.

“Uhm,” Will looked down on his plate. There were a million thoughts swirling in his brain. They were all too intense. He changed the subject, “Where… Where are you sleeping, anyway?”

“I slept in the bed upstairs last night, but tonight I have to attend to some errands at home. I hope you can sleep well enough, and heal. I’m sure the killer won’t bother coming here. I will be back tomorrow at lunchtime. Breakfast is already prepared, you’ll just have to heat it up.”

“Hannibal, it really isn’t necessary for you to come all the way here. It’s an hour-long drive. Don’t you have patients?”

“I canceled them all till the end of the week.”

“Why?”

“Will, money is not a problem for me. And…” Hannibal swallowed, put his fork and knife down, “You have to understand. When Alana called me from the hospital telling me you were injured, I felt my heart break.”

Will stayed silent.

“I couldn’t lose you. I feel responsible as your therapist and your friend for what happened to you. I can’t allow anyone to hurt you again, and I blame myself for not speaking to Jack sooner. Clearly, all of this gruesome work is fueling your nightmares. Your fatigue and hallucinations are affecting your reaction speed. You could’ve shot that serial killer, but he got you first. And thank god he missed. One foot to the left, and you’d be dead.”

“What are you saying?” the gears in Will’s brain were turning too slow, it was still stuck on the words ‘*felt my heart break*’.

Hannibal let the silence envelop them, let his words sink in. Then he cleared his throat and asked: “How have you been feeling these past few days in regard to nightmares?”

“Well… I think I honestly haven’t felt better in a long time. No nightmares to speak of.”

“You should’ve been feeling like this all along, and it’s my fault you haven’t. I told Jack that we should stop exposure to triggering sights, at least until full recovery. But also you should reconsider this line of activity entirely, in light of how damaging it is to you.”

Hannibal might’ve been as well telling him that Will should relocate to live on the Moon. Will sighed.

“I… But what about the victims? Their families?”

“I don’t care about the victims, Will. I care about you. You should put your needs first,” Hannibal said firmly.

Will stayed silent for a long time. It was such a simple statement, and somehow it felt like a huge revelation. Like for the first time he was presented with a choice. He could just… Not do it. Go back to teaching, and nothing else. Go back to nights without nightmares. To choose himself.

They ate silently, the only noise an occasional shuffling sound from the dogs, and the crackling of the candles.

“Thank you,” Will said finally, not sure if he was thankful for the food, or the advice. Both, probably.

“Dessert?” Hannibal asked softly, “It’s tiramisu with hazelnuts.”

“God, you’re trying to kill me,” Will groaned.

Hannibal smiled.

* * *

Will got ready to sleep. Hannibal had just left. Before he did though, he made sure to remind Will all about the medication he should take, the timings and the doses, plus the premade breakfast he left in the fridge. Will was both embarrassed and pleased.

They lingered awkwardly in the doorway. Do they shake hands? Do they hug? What can Will possibly say to convey the gratitude he was feeling at that moment?

“I don’t know what I’d do without you,” Will finally said.

“It’s a privilege to take care of you,” Hannibal said. He looked Will over once again, and went to his car. Which was a good thing, because Will was left standing on his porch, utterly speechless.

He was still speechless when he settled in his bed, not taking off the robe. He wanted to feel its warmth, as if it was a hug from Hannibal.

What was going on between Hannibal and him? He couldn't really say.

Except these past few days since he's been shot, Hannibal cared for him like no one in his life, and told him things like 'I felt my heart break', 'you should put your needs first', 'it's a privilege to take care of you,' like they were absolutely common things to say. Maybe they were. Will wasn't used to such raw honesty. It made everything inside of him tingle with hope and warmth.

And even though Hannibal had just left, Will craved the moment he'd be back. He imagined hugging him, inhaling his scent. Touching his broad shoulders and having his intense eyes staring back at Will.

In the forgiving darkness of his room, under the covers, he imagined Hannibal pinning him to the front door, and kissing him. He'd smell masculine, and his desire for Will would be forceful and passionate. His lips would be soft and attentive while he savored Will, and his hands warm and steady on Will's hips. He felt himself react at the thought, but somehow was again too embarrassed to go through with what his body wanted. It felt like Hannibal could see him, even though he wasn't even there. Maybe, soon. He fell asleep peacefully, nestled in the safety of the soft robe.

* * *

The next morning Will woke up, having slept the best he had in years.

Soft light was seeping through the window, and his dogs were waiting expectantly to go for their morning walk. His arm was hurting less, and Will managed to change without much discomfort. He eyed the sling, and opted out again. He knew it was wrong, but it irritated him to wear it.

After letting the dogs out, he put a pot of water to boil, so he could cook some homemade food for them.

In the freezer Will found a tupperware with a card labeled '*Heart and scrambled eggs*', that had heating instructions written in neat handwriting. Will ate the whole meal with more pleasure than he could admit. The cream-colored card was made from some sort of fancy material, and Will felt a bit silly that he didn't want to throw it away. He hid it in the mess of the materials on his lure-making desk.

Then he took his medicine, and went out to spend time with his dogs outside.

They loved running around the property, and Will remembered how Hannibal looked when he played with them yesterday, a true natural. Like a love-sick puppy, he found himself missing Hannibal. It was ridiculous. He has lived in this house for years and never felt lonely at all. Hannibal stayed with him for two days, most of which Will was asleep, and yet, his heart was aching. Now it felt like Hannibal's space in the home was empty.

After watching the dogs play outside for a bit, he busied himself with preparing the feed, making sure there was enough for a few days. He wondered if it was weird sleeping on the bed downstairs, and if he should move upstairs, and make the living room more presentable for Hannibal. Maybe also do something about the second room upstairs, which was unused, so Hannibal could stay over. Was he actually planning to stay over or now that Will felt better he wouldn't bother anymore?

All in all, he decided to make fishing lures. It was one of the few things that he could do indoors that truly relaxed him. His arm was hurting a bit, but he ignored the numb pain as he got really absorbed in the task, and lost track of time. He didn't know how much of it had passed as he daydreamed about his next fishing outing, and made lure after lure with colorful bits and pieces.

Suddenly, there was an incoming call from Jack.

"Will, hi," his boss' voice was cold and distant. There was clearly some noise in the background, indicating that Jack was in the middle of something important, and not calling out of courtesy.

"Jack."

"There is some good news and bad news."

"Yeah?"

"Barry Campbell was murdered last night. Displayed and all. We're almost sure it's the Chesapeake Ripper."

"I assume that's good news," Will said, suddenly feeling like a giant weight lifted off his shoulders.

"For you, yes. For him, not really."

"What's the bad news?"

"We need you at the scene. Everything is still fresh and there are definitely clues we're missing. As you know, the Ripper hasn't killed for some time. We have no idea why he would go after Campbell. I need answers."

"Jack…" Will felt a sharp pain go through his arm.

"I know what Dr Kim and Dr Lecter said about you resting," Jack interrupted, "But you're the best in the field. We need to solve this case as quickly as possible. You, of all people, should know the stakes."

"I… I can't, Jack," Will said, a wave of nausea at his throat. He felt like a whiny, ungrateful child, and yet he couldn't make himself do it. These past few days without the Ripper breathing down his neck have been the happiest he felt in ages.

Jack's silence was full of disappointment. Clearly, he called directly from the scene, hoping Will would just hop into a car and come straight over.

"Promise me to think about it at least. I'll call you tomorrow," Jack said before hanging up, but Will was still picking up his irritation through the phone. He sighed, dejected.

A sudden sound of car tires on the gravel made Will look up from his desk.

His heart skipped a beat. He really needed to see Hannibal, so he rushed out to greet him on the porch. He grinned, squinting in the sunlight so he could watch him come out of the car, and saw the car wasn't a black Bentley.

"Alana…" he tried not to sound too disappointed as he watched Alana come up the steps, "Hi."

The dogs all gathered around her, with friendly sniffing.

"Hi, Will. I'm glad to see you look better," she said, petting his dogs.

"Thanks, I've been sleeping well," Will said, awkwardly rubbing at the nape of his neck.

"Can I come in? I brought some blueberry muffins."

"Sure, come on in."

As soon as she stepped over the threshold, Alana noticed the flowers in the vase. It wasn't hard, they truly seemed ridiculously foreign in Will's plain house. She turned to Will with an upturned eyebrow.

"Hannibal was here. He's been taking care of me," Will said, cheeks pink.

"With flowers?"

"Uhm," Will hummed. "He is supposed to be here any moment, actually."

"Oh, good," Alana said, even though her face said the opposite.

"Would you like some coffee?"

"Thanks, I'd love to," she unpacked the shop-bought muffins. They looked out of place on Hannibal's fancy linen napkins, "How are you feeling?"

"My arm is still sore, but I'm able to use it little by little. It's been a bit of a learning curve. On the bright side, I can't remember the last time I slept so well. I'm really getting my much-needed rest now."

They sat down with their coffee, Alana in Hannibal's seat, which gave Will a pang of irrational annoyance. Will forced himself to make conversation and eye contact, he really looked at her. He took in her long black hair, deep blue eyes. She still was a striking woman,

and yet, he didn't care at all. As she talked about everything and nothing, he couldn't help but occasionally sneak a hopeful peek out of the window.

Charlie wandered inside the house and started sniffing at Alana's bag. She ruffled his head, stroking him playfully.

"How are your dogs? Did they miss you?"

"Hannibal's been taking good care of them. He always gives them treats, so I fear now they love him more than me," Will said, grinning a bit. It wasn't hard to win over his dogs, but Hannibal made the extra effort. Of course he did.

Alana pursed her lips. Will took a bite of a muffin, mainly to avoid looking at her disapproving gaze.

"These are very good," Will said, filling the silence. Needless to say, Hannibal's desserts were so much better.

"Right? I got them at that coffee place near the Academy. Have you been eating well?"

"Yeah, I… Hannibal is feeding me. All kinds of fancy stuff," Will felt himself blush. It seemed like in every answer he couldn't help but mention Hannibal.

"Will, are you and Hannibal?..."

Will rubbed at his neck once again, feeling it heating up too. "Uhm, he's just been very kind to me when I needed him most. Of course he's being a bit extra about it," Will gestured at the flowers, "But, I mean, it's Hannibal. You've known him longer than I do. You know how he gets."

"And I've never seen him treat a patient like he treats you," Alana said curtly, "It's not professional at all. I'm surprised at his behavior. I should have a word with him about boundaries."

"Technically, not a patient," Will mumbled in his coffee. "He's probably just sorry for what happened to me."

Finally, he heard the sound of heavy tires outside. The dogs rushed out to greet the new guest, tails wagging. Will felt like wagging his non-existent tail too.

Hannibal came in, carrying various bags of groceries in his hands. A big shoulder bag was draped over his shoulder.

"Speak of the devil," Alana said, watching Hannibal closely.

"Alana, hi," Hannibal greeted her, a little bit taken aback, "Didn't expect to see you here."

"Neither did I."

“Shall I make you some coffee?” Will asked, trying to break the silent conversation that was going on between them.

“Sure, dear Will,” Hannibal said, as if he said it a thousand times before, and Will almost dropped the coffee pot.

He sensed the shock rolling off Alana, and it set something off in him. He was suddenly pissed off at her. What was so shocking about Hannibal calling him that? About him being dear to Hannibal? Will had a sudden urge to kiss Hannibal full on the mouth, just to shock her into leaving.

“Will has been telling me all about your care, and frankly, I’m a bit confused.”

“Why so?” Hannibal busied himself putting the various groceries away. Once again, he looked like this was his kitchen, he knew where everything was supposed to go, moved with ease around Will.

“He is still your patient.”

“He’s never been my patient officially, Alana. All we have is… Conversations,” Hannibal said, “You don’t need to worry about my professionalism.”

“We’ve known each other for years, and I’ve never seen you like this before. Not with anyone.”

“Probably because I’ve never felt like this before,” Hannibal said, looking at Will, who was carefully listening to the whole exchange, heart beating wildly. He wished the floor to swallow him whole, and yet he didn’t want to miss a single word Hannibal had to say.

“And how is it that you feel?”

“Alana,” it was as if Hannibal’s voice itself was drawing the boundary in the air. “I’m not sure if this concerns you. We know where we are with each other. Isn’t that enough?”

“Right,” Alana said, and an uncomfortable silence settled between all three of them.

Slowly, they proceeded to talk about safer things. Will’s wound, and the weather, and the dogs. Hannibal was underlyingly polite, Will’s responses were mono-syllabic, and Alana was struggling to come up with new things to ask.

After about half an hour of such a painful interaction, Alana said her goodbyes and left. Will couldn’t be more happy. His heart was pounding, yet he felt his whole body relax.

“I thought she’d never leave,” Will sighed in relief, closing the front door.

“My-my, Will, how rude of you.” Hannibal grinned, no reprimand in his voice whatsoever. Hannibal cleaned from the table, as Will took his medicine.

“So… Jack called,” Will said, when they settled on the couch.

“What did he say?”

“Barry Campbell is dead. He was murdered last night and displayed. They’re almost sure it’s the Chesapeake Ripper.”

“I’m glad to hear it. Now you’re safe.”

“Is it strange that I don’t feel anything? Just relief, and maybe even joy. He truly deserved it.”

“Just like Garret Jacob Hobbs,” Hannibal said.

With surprise Will thought that yes, he felt the same mix of strange emotions after he killed Hobbs.

“Jack still wants me to go and look. I told him I won’t go, but I fear he will call me day and night until I give in,” Will sighed.

“Will, you know he can’t make you go.”

“He can’t. But it feels like I have to. The Ripper case… It’s been driving me nuts. I feel like I need closure with the Ripper. After I catch him, I can start thinking about stopping consultations.”

They stayed silent for a bit.

“I will support any decision you make. Just know that having your best interest at heart, I would advise you against it. No need to put yourself in a triggering situation when you’ve been doing so well. Healing takes time.”

“Thank you,” Will said, “You do always have my best interest at heart”.

At that point, he felt a sudden exhaustion envelop him, and leaned to lay his head on Hannibal’s shoulder. He didn’t care if it was weird, he only knew he needed Hannibal close. They could deal with the meaning of it all later. Thankfully, Hannibal just put a hand around his shoulder, and held him, caressing his arm slowly with his thumb.

He dozed off, content and safe, breathing in Hannibal’s soothing scent.

* * *

Will woke up on the couch alone, missing the warmth of Hannibal’s body. It was already dark outside. Hannibal was in the kitchen, feeding his dogs, and they were eating noisily, which was probably what woke Will up.

“I didn’t know you made homemade food for your dogs. Alana didn’t mention it. I would’ve cooked for them, if I’d known.” Hannibal said, when Will came into the kitchen.

“It’s alright. I just don’t trust canned food. My father used to buy cheap canned food, and one of our dogs got poisoned once. It was horrible, we almost lost him. Since that time, I’ve always tried to cook for them myself.”

“Noted. Is there anything else you need me to do?”

“I need you to not fret so much,” Will smiled, seeing that Hannibal was in full dinner preparation mode, again.

“I’m afraid I can't do that,” Hannibal smiled in return. “Tonight we’re having grilled meat and jasmine rice, with homemade teriyaki sauce.”

“Jesus, Hannibal-”

“You need to eat. I accept no objections.”

“It does smell incredible,” Will finally conceded. Because it really did.

As Hannibal lit up the candles, Will settled at the table, wondering how they got to the point of already having a sort of routine to their dinners.

Of course, the food also looked gorgeous. Hannibal took the time to cut the meat into thin strips and arrange it on some sort of leaf with pomegranate seeds, then pour the teriyaki sauce, so it was dripping in the most appetizing way.

“Where did you learn to cook like that?”

“I learned by myself. I’ve always cooked, since I was 16,” Hannibal said, sitting down next to Will, “It's important to take as much pleasure from life as one can, that is one of my principles. Consuming good food, and feeding others is a great joy for me. Cooking is one of my havens. Not to mention that it’s a way of being in control.”

Will moaned at the first taste. It was absolutely divine.

“I only know how to cook the fish I catch. Nothing fancy,” he said, already taking another bite.

“You should treat me sometime.”

“I will,” Will promised, “But don’t get too excited, it’s just baked trout. With a bit of salt and lemon.”

“I see no fault in that.”

Will tried to relax and enjoy dinner, but his arm was pulsating with pain, and his stomach was full of butterflies. He was nervous and wondering if he should be the one to take the next step. Hannibal has been very straightforward in his intentions. Or so Will thought, based on their talk with Alana. With his gift he still couldn’t pick up much from Hannibal, except that he felt satisfied and comfortable. He decided to test the waters.

“So, uh, Alana seemed surprised. She couldn’t understand why you’re here.”

Neither can I, he didn’t add.

“I think my answers have been sufficient,” Hannibal said simply. “She didn’t stay long.”

“She bolted,” Will grinned.

“Do you still have feelings for her?” Hannibal asked.

Will wanted to laugh. Really?

“Definitely not.”

“What changed?”

She’s nothing against you.

Will took a gulp of water, buying himself some time to really think about it.

“Even though she doesn’t treat me like a science experiment to study and document, she still sees a patient in me. A wounded animal. She’ll never be able to unsee it,” he said, pensive. “And it’s not really appealing in a partner, to always second-guess whether they think you’re ill or weak. I do want a partner who cares for me, but not one who pities me. My feelings for her faded away as quickly as they arrived.”

“I believe you’re right. She cares about you, but sees you as a victim. I don’t,” Hannibal said.

“I know you don’t,” Will mumbled gratefully, noting how Hannibal immediately drew a comparison between himself and Alana.

“And I’m not here because I pity you,” Hannibal said, and Will’s stomach flipped. Sometimes it felt like Hannibal could read his anxious mind. “I know you can take care of yourself too. But occasionally… You don’t need to be the only one.”

Will just nodded at that, gratitude once again too hard to express. He hoped Hannibal could read it in his eyes.

Tentatively, they proceed to talk about everything and nothing. Will was always amazed how easy it was to talk to Hannibal, despite his unique worldview, peculiar vocabulary and strange turns of phrases. Will really didn’t like long conversations before he met Hannibal. Not with therapists, nor with friends. That’s why he enjoyed solitary fishing and preferred dogs to people. With Hannibal, he never wished their conversation to stop.

After dinner, Will asked, hoping he didn’t sound too spoiled:

“Are you going to stay?”

“Yes. I brought the overnight bag with all the necessary things,” Hannibal hesitated, “But I have to ask… Do you want me here?”

“I do,” Will said, barely masked relief on his face, and murmured, “Thank you.”

“How is your arm now?” Hannibal asked, as they cleaned up. Hannibal washed the dishes, and Will dried them and put them away.

“Much better, but it still hurts sometimes. I need to… Could you…”

Will paused.

“Anything. What is it?”

“Shave me?” Will was avoiding Hannibal’s gaze, “Sorry I was rude about it yesterday. But it really bothers me being so unkempt.”

His beard had indeed grown longer than he used to wear it, and he had a prominent mustache. But he just told a lie, as it didn’t bother him at all. When he wasn’t working, he could go for weeks without shaving, since he barely saw anyone. What Will actually craved was Hannibal’s hands on him. He wanted to see what effect they would have. Just the thought of it sent sparks down his spine.

“With pleasure,” Hannibal said, and Will’s stomach swooped in anticipation.

When the dishes were done, and the table cleaned, they went into the bathroom. Hannibal brought a chair for him to sit. Will’s downstairs bathroom was nothing fancy, and quite small. The upstairs one was the bigger one with the bath, but Will wasn’t going to offer having his beard shaved there. He didn’t know why, but he quite liked Hannibal crowding his space, towering over him.

Hannibal then got one of Will’s towels, which he draped around his neck, and a vanity bag.

“What’s that?”

“You’re well aware that I hate that awful aftershave of yours,” Hannibal said, taking out a few bottles and lotions from the bag. “As a counter courtesy to me shaving you, I’ll ask you to wear a better one. For me.”

“Fine,” Will scoffed, not knowing if he should be flattered at the attention, or annoyed that Hannibal brought all this stuff with him, clearly knowing that Will’s resolve would break.

Hannibal started slowly, putting the shaving cream on Will’s jaw, working with precision and care. Will took the time to study Hannibal in the mirror. He enjoyed the flexing of muscle under Hannibal’s shirt, and the way he handled Will, those hands of a surgeon clearly knowing how to hold him with comfort, yet firmly enough to guide him where he wanted him.

Hannibal took the time to massage the cream into Will’s jaw, and even pressed a little at the spots behind Will’s ears with his clean fingers, massaging the scalp. Will concentrated on every urge he had not to moan out loud, it was so pleasant.

The entire time, Will followed his moves closely in the mirror. Hannibal was truly stunning. Will didn’t know how he hadn’t allowed himself to notice him before. That upper lip of his,

the slight age wrinkles around his eyes, his meticulously coiffed hair. Will felt his heart beating fast, loving the feeling of Hannibal manhandling his jaw.

The only sounds were his and Hannibal's breathing, mixed together. Then Hannibal took out a razor. Will was surprised that he didn't use an electric shaver, but on the other hand it was Hannibal. Of course he'd prefer a fancy manual razor to a noisy machine.

"Would you like to be completely clean shaved?"

"Yes, it'll grow back really fast. In a couple of days when my arm is fully functional, I'll be able to shave it myself."

"Very well then."

Hannibal's razor was feather-light, and Will barely felt it against his skin. Will closed his eyes, loving the feeling of Hannibal's hands touching him, against his soapy beard, and then against his smooth skin.

Such a deadly weapon at his neck, and yet Hannibal didn't cut him once.

An intrusive thought suddenly appeared: Hannibal cutting his neck, the same way Garret Jacob Hobbs cut Abigail's neck, blood pouring down, soaking his clothes. Will's eyes rolling back in his head, his body going completely limp. Hannibal taking his life, with greed and violence, just because he could. The momentary vision was so wrong, yet so gorgeous, his breath hitched. He could imagine it in vivid details.

Hannibal swiftly cleaned Will with the towel, and then his fingers rubbed a fancy-smelling aftershave directly into the rosy fresh skin of Will's jaw and cheeks.

"It's done," Hannibal said, studying Will in the mirror.

"Oh," Will blinked rapidly, also focusing on the result of it. He looked at least five years younger, and he smelled so much better than before. "Thank you so much. I feel better now."

He really did.

"And you smell delicious," Hannibal said, barely audible, washing his hands and gathering his stuff. Will's cheeks turned pink.

As he watched Hannibal wash his hands, Will almost groaned at himself. He had been a really inconsiderate host.

"Sorry, did you need to shower? Or maybe have a bath upstairs? I never offered. But you're free to use anything you need in this house. There are bigger towels under the sink."

"Thank you. I will shower later. When you go to sleep."

So I don't miss spending time with you was implied, and Will's heart squeezed in his chest.

When they settled on the couch, Will couldn't stop touching his own face. It felt good to be clean-shaven, and better to be taken care of so well. When he shaved by himself he used an old shaving machine and often there were cuts and rashes afterward. Now his skin felt velvety-soft. Hannibal caught him doing it, and his eyes crinkled in amusement.

They talked some more, played with the dogs, and soon enough Will was exhausted again. He vaguely remembered changing into pajamas, and going to sleep in his downstairs bed.

* * *

The black silhouetted Wendigo was watching him from the corner of the room. His mouth was frozen in a devilish grin with half-eaten birds stuck in his teeth. He had just cut a small furry animal at the neck with a shaving razor, and there was fresh blood pouring everywhere. Will's eyes focused, and the features of the monster became Hannibal's as he looked straight in Will's eyes, violent and wild.

Will woke up screaming. He gasped for breath, and became aware that he was dripping in sweat.

In an instant, Hannibal's weight dipped the bed, and his arms enveloped Will in a possessive hug, his hand cupped the back of Will's neck. Faster than a reflex, he immediately relaxed in Hannibal's arms, like a prey caught by a hunter.

"It's okay Will, I'm here, it's okay," Hannibal whispered soothing words against his hair, grounding him, keeping him tight in his embrace. Will's hands gripped at his strong back. He tried to slow down his breathing. Looked in the corner of the room and saw nothing there, just the armchair with Hannibal's book, where he was reading before Will woke up from his nightmare.

"S-sorry. Not the most pleasant sight," Will mumbled with an awkward laugh, both embarrassment and joy overwhelming him. He didn't have to go through this alone. Not anymore.

"Nothing to be sorry about. And I beg to disagree. You're always a pleasant sight," Hannibal let Will go, just a little bit, just enough to look into Will's eyes.

It's been a while since Will understood he could look into Hannibal's eyes for a long time, finding secluded corners and galaxies, and never feel lost. It was like looking at the dark abyss, and finding it soothing. Will struggled with keeping eye contact with most people, but Hannibal was the exception. Hannibal was the exception in most things.

Will let out a shuddering breath, his cheeks were hot from what Hannibal was implying. It was insane how safe he felt in his arms. He couldn't make himself break the hug. Couldn't stop staring at Hannibal.

For the first time, with his heightened empathy he suddenly could feel Hannibal, loud and clear. There they were in the open — Hannibal's intense feelings for him. Deep longing, and underlying arousal. He didn't know where his feelings began, and Hannibal's ended, but at that moment they were in total sync.

He opened his mouth to say something, but no words came out.

“Will. Are you going to ask me why am I here again?” Hannibal’s low voice, soft and smooth, a barely-there reprimanding tone. His eyes, flickering for a fraction of a second to Will’s lips.

Will’s heart was thumping. He was sure Hannibal could hear it.

“No.”

Will licked his own lips, and leaned forward.

It was soft, yet firm, and more possessive than Will could’ve imagined. Will never kissed a man before, and he found it so enjoyable: the way Hannibal’s strong hand on his neck was keeping him in place, the mix of his ridiculously appealing cologne and the manly scent beneath it, his other arm also enveloping his form and keeping Will safe.

“You feel so good,” Will sighed against his lips.

It was dark around them, the room only faintly illuminated by the table lamp, but Will still saw Hannibal’s pupils blown wide with desire.

Hannibal kissed him again, deeper, licking into his mouth, sliding his tongue against Will’s, savoring him as if he was a delicious dessert. And Will was enjoying him in return. Hannibal has clearly come out of the shower recently, his breath was minty-fresh, and Will couldn’t get enough of him.

They kissed for what seemed like an eternity, each taste and lick making Will’s blood boil and stomach swoop in hunger. Hannibal’s hands were caressing him like he was precious, something to handle with care. Will sucked Hannibal’s upper lip into his mouth, playing it with his teeth, committing the feeling of it to memory.

Eventually, Will broke the kisses to take a breath, and unconsciously glanced at the nightstand. Hannibal understood him without words. He brought a glass of water, and Will gulped it down fast. Hannibal stood to leave Will to rest, but Will tugged him back into the bed, and under the covers. As he laid comfortably, Will snuggled against him, head heavy in the crook between Hannibal’s neck and shoulder, and arm securely draped around his middle. He slept, finally at peace.

Primo

Soft morning light tickled at his skin. He woke up even more well-rested than the previous night, and stirred in Hannibal's arms. Will was pressing himself ridiculously close into his warm body, and his head was resting on Hannibal's chest. Memories of last night rushed to him, and pleasure spread warm in his stomach.

Hannibal was already awake. He was caressing Will's hair with careful movements, as if he was petting a wild animal who he was trying not to spook. Will yawned and lifted a bit, so he could face Hannibal.

"My dear Will," Hannibal smiled, and kissed Will chastely on the cheek, "Good morning."

"Was last night a dream?" Will sighed, recalling their more hungry kisses.

He couldn't believe it really happened. But it did, because they were cuddling in bed. Hannibal just kissed him. Last night they were kissing. It was a thing that they did now.

Will went for conversations in Hannibal's office. Hannibal invited Will to fancy dinners. Will shared his darkest thoughts with Hannibal. Hannibal accepted Will. Will needed Hannibal. Hannibal took care of him like no one ever did. Hannibal kissed Will. Will kissed Hannibal.

It was inevitable. It felt as natural as breathing.

"Thank heavens, it wasn't," Hannibal said, tugging Will closer and on top of himself, placing a second kiss on Will's lips.

His big hand sneaked down Will's body, finding its place on Will's lower back. Being held so protectively was something Will could get used to. Little by little, Hannibal started kissing the side of his face, and down his jaw, his touches getting bolder.

"Sorry but I… Really need to go to the bathroom. I stink. I'm all sweaty, and…" Will was babbling. But Hannibal smelled as gorgeous as a perfume shop, and Will wanted to make sure he smelled just as good for Hannibal, before they would go further.

"If you're concerned about my reaction, I can honestly say you smell like you, Will, and it's extremely appealing," Hannibal nuzzled behind his ear and into his neck. He laid open mouth kisses on Will's throat, making his toes curl. It was baffling, how much Hannibal really enjoyed him, just the way he was.

He squeezed him closer, making Will giggle and squirm.

"No, please, let me, just…." Will managed to free himself, finally, taking extra care not to hurt his arm.

"Traitor," Hannibal said, but he was smiling as he watched Will snatch the robe from the chair and go to the bathroom.

***

Will's arm was recovering swiftly, so he managed to take a shower without much discomfort. After having washed up, he emerged from the bathroom to find that Hannibal had already fed and let the dogs out, and was preparing breakfast.

"Now you're just spoiling me," Will sighed.

"Not a word. Please return to bed. I've changed the sheets, and breakfast is on the way."

"Yes, doc," Will teased, and returned to the living room. After the shower, he wore the robe and pajama pants. He figured Hannibal would appreciate him clad in only his gift. Something hot unfurled in his stomach at the thought, and he took his pants and boxers off, leaving only the robe, and tied it tightly around his waist.

Hannibal came into the room carrying the breakfast tray to the bed.

"Aren't you a vision," Hannibal said, admiring Will sprawled on the comfy-looking duvet.

"I can say the same thing about you."

Hannibal was wearing dark-red pajama bottoms, and a long-sleeved pajama top that somehow managed to look classy. He kissed Will sweetly, and then settled by his side, resting the tray on his lap.

There was toast and a few jars of jams with special spreading knives, plus an array of cheeses, pieces of fruit like apple and grapes, and two cups of freshly ground coffee.

"Is your arm still sore?"

"Not really. Feels much better. But let's pretend it is," Will said, shameless, and Hannibal smiled fondly.

Spreading blueberry jam on toast, Hannibal started to feed Will. Little by little, he proceeded to feed him a bit of everything. Will sighed with pleasure each time. He didn't even have to pretend to enjoy it so much, as it was all incredibly delicious, and so far off from his usual breakfast (none, or just plain coffee). He carefully took each bite in his lips, almost kissing Hannibal's fingertips, and closed his eyes to savor the taste better.

"You have no idea how desirable you look right now," Hannibal murmured, taking in Will's red lips, his exposed chest, and long legs, his flushed cheeks and wild curls.

Will couldn't stop staring at Hannibal too. His soft gaze, and beautiful hands. He looked so warm and domestic, and Will thought he'd never get used to seeing him out of his formal suits.

"What changed?" Will asked, taking a grape and feeding Hannibal in return.

"Hmm?"

“I don’t remember picking up desire from you during our sessions. Sorry, conversations.” Will said, “Though maybe I was too preoccupied with myself to care.”

“That is the right mindset for therapy.” Hannibal said, caressing Will’s curls with his other hand, “But I assure you, Will, I’ve noticed you since day one.”

“I find it hard to believe.”

“You are the single most beautiful man I’ve ever seen in my entire life,” Hannibal said simply, like that sentence alone wouldn’t set Will’s whole body aflame, “I have no idea why you insist on wearing clothes that don’t fit you, or hiding behind unflattering glasses. Your eyes change color depending on the light, your hair is gorgeously untamed, and your body is reminiscent of the poetized bodies of Greek gods.”

“But-”

“Shh. If that wasn’t enough, soon after meeting you, I discovered how fiercely intelligent you are. The more l got to know you, the more fascinated I was with all the layers of your character. Seeing you wounded on that hospital bed, the bandage soaked in blood… Well, that was the final drop. I decided I couldn’t bear hiding my feelings any longer.”

“Oh,” Will watched him, too stunned to say anything else. Coming from anyone else in the world, all of it would’ve sounded like a joke. Hannibal was genuine, Will could feel it.

They stayed silent, drinking the coffee, as Will let that confession sink deep inside his heart.

“What about you?” Hannibal asked, almost shyly, “I had hopes that you could reciprocate, but I wasn’t sure you would.”

Will bit another piece of toast with jam and thought about it.

“You… I never allowed myself to really think about you, Hannibal. You were my therapist. My friend. An anchor for the chaos that was happening around me. The instant bond between us was too deep to test. I guess I always had a subconscious attraction to you, but I tried very hard to resist it. I didn’t allow myself to look at you too deeply, because I knew I’d be drawn to you. And that scared me in more ways than one.”

A shadow appeared on Hannibal’s face, barely perceptible.

“But then you cared for me in the hospital like no one ever did in my entire life, not even my parents. And then you were in my home, as if it was a given. So familiar with everything, walking around like you’ve lived here for years. You just belonged alongside me. It struck me how insanely good it felt to have you near. Yesterday you were gone for half a day, and I was so love-sick it was ridiculous. Kept looking out of the window, hoping you’d return soon.”

“I’m so pleased to hear it. I missed you too,” Hannibal said, looking in his eyes.

“I don’t… Like the rich,” Will said, with a laugh, “I’ve always been poor. Had to claw my way up in every way. But you’re different, somehow. You don’t have the snobbishness or

stupidity of the rich. You like expensive things because they bring you pleasure and comfort. You deserve them because you can appreciate them. Plus, you're really the smartest person in the room, effortlessly. I truly enjoy our conversations."

It felt so good to be so honest, saying everything he tried so hard to hide, even from himself. Before Hannibal could say anything, Will cupped his jaw.

"And you're also gorgeous, by the way. Now that I finally see you, I can't take my eyes off you. Your elegant cheekbones. And your soft eyes. You smile so rarely, but it suits you so much," he leaned forward to kiss Hannibal chastely on the cheek, smelling his perfume, "And your smell is killing me."

"You smell mouth-watering too," Hannibal stroked at Will's jaw, now smooth and clean-shaven, with unmasked appreciation. Will wondered if he preferred his jaw smooth or hairy. It automatically made him wonder about other things.

"So you, uhm. Men, women?" Will asked, cheeks pink, and genuinely curious.

"And anything in between. Gender is not a factor that my attraction takes into consideration."

Will wondered how many there had been. If he was special. Hannibal looked like a man who could have anyone he wanted, and sudden jealousy flared in Will's mind.

He must've got lost in anxious thoughts, because Hannibal placed the tray on the nightstand, and then leaned in to kiss him on the lips, making all of Will's worries fly out of the window.

"Have you ever been with a man, Will?" Hannibal asked between indulging, gentle kisses.

"No," his skin grew hot, "But I've entertained the idea. Especially recently."

"You blush so prettily," Hannibal sighed against his skin, and peppered his cheeks with more kisses, "What ideas have you been entertaining?"

"No, I'm not…," Will protested, squirming in Hannibal's embrace, pulse speeding up, "You won't make me confess anything. This is not therapy."

Hannibal chuckled, and whispered, "It most definitely isn't," in his ear. Then he kissed at his earlobe, sucking it into his mouth, making Will gasp.

Will gripped his face with both hands to make Hannibal face him, and kissed him full on the mouth. The kiss turned heated fast, and Will was enjoying how their tongues felt together, slick and hot.

"What would you like?"

"Anything… Just, please."

"I'm asking to know your boundaries, so both of us can be comfortable."

“I’ll tell you if something makes me uncomfortable, I promise,” Will said, heart squeezing at Hannibal’s consideration, “And I trust you will do the same. Right now, I just need *you*.”

Hannibal kissed Will's neck, and his Adam's apple bobbed as he swallowed.

A hand sneaked into Will’s robe and caressed his torso, and his sides. Hannibal kissed every inch of Will’s skin with a reverence that made Will speechless. He slowly undid the sash, as if he were unwrapping the most desirable present. His breath hitched when he realized Will wasn’t wearing anything underneath.

“You little minx,” Hannibal sighed, “The things you do to me.”

Hannibal kissed Will’s neck and torso, then slipped lower to suckle at his right nipple. No one ever bothered with that before, and Will was surprised that it felt so good. Maybe that was just Hannibal, everything with him felt a million times better than before.

Hannibal sucked the hardening nub inside his mouth, licked at it, and Will couldn’t help but tangle his hands in his feather-soft hair, keeping him where he was. Hannibal’s other hand came to play with the left nipple.

“Oh wow,” Will was muttering, completely lost in the sensations.

Without stopping his insistent licks, Hannibal started touching Will all over, mapping him with his big hands, enjoying the hipbones and the abdomen and the legs, stroking Will so worshipfully as if he were made from melted gold. He took Will’s cock in a loose grip, jerking him lightly, just a tease really, and it still felt like Will’s whole body was on fire. Then he moved to give his attention to Will’s other nipple, licking lovingly and occasionally blowing some air at it, and Will’s whole body trembled.

“Hannibal, please,” Will begged, breath growing faster.

Suddenly he stopped, unlatching from Will’s nipple with a filthy pop sound, and reached for the vanity bag on the nightstand.

Will was already hard, and they barely even started. His cock was arching toward his stomach, a bit of precum glistening at the tip, begging for attention. He was all naked in front of Hannibal, except for the loosely-hanging robe around his shoulders that barely counted, and the man was still fully dressed in his pajamas.

“Want to see you too,” Will pleaded, tugging at Hannibal’s shirt as he leaned over him trying to reach the nightstand.

He managed to make Hannibal get rid of his top, and stared at the revealed gorgeousness underneath. That was the body of someone who took their physical health seriously. Nothing could’ve prepared Will for how hot he’d find the hairy chest, the lean muscles, the prominent pectorals, and the happy trail. Hannibal had the slightest bit of fat on his tummy, and that part of him was also unbelievably sexy. Will resisted the strange urge to bite him.

As he ogled, he entirely missed how Hannibal finally fished the condoms and lube from the bag.

“You came prepared,” Will flushed, “Of course you did.”

“I’m sorry if it looks like I planned it. I didn’t. I just always try to be prepared for any situation,” Hannibal had the modesty to look bashful too.

“You didn’t plan to ravish me? Now I’m offended.”

“Will,” Hannibal rolled his eyes fondly, “Do we need a condom? I’ve tested recently and I am clean.”

“Me too. I haven’t been with anyone in years,” Will confessed, “So don’t expect me to last long.”

“All that matters is for you to enjoy yourself, love” Hannibal said, getting some lube on his hand. He stroked Will’s cock, mixing it with his precome.

The lube enhanced the feeling, and Will arched off the bed. Hannibal was kissing at his torso and down, butterfly kisses, and stroking him in a maddeningly slow, teasing rhythm. Will got a hand into Hannibal’s hair again, as the other one momentarily covered his own eyes. He couldn’t look just yet, he feared he might come just from the sight of Hannibal’s big, possessive hand on him, it’d be too fast. He couldn’t believe how incredibly skillful Hannibal was, stroking him just how he liked it, giving attention to the head and the underside, with enough pressure to drive Will insane with the need for more, but not enough to set him off.

“Feels so good,” Will moaned, almost in awe.

“Such a feast for me,” Hannibal said, enjoying the view. He was hard too, the length of him visible in his pajama pants, and Will craved to see it in full glory, and get his hands on him.

“Would you like my mouth?” Hannibal whispered against his thoroughly kissed skin, making Will shiver all over.

“Fuck, yes. Please.”

He wasn’t going to last. At all.

Hannibal stroked him some more, until he was fully hard and leaking. Then he placed a teasing kiss on Will’s hipbone, gripping his cock with purpose now.

He mouthed at the base, and started playing with Will’s balls with his other hand. Then took him in a tighter grip, and finally sank his mouth over the head, sucking at it with abandon.

“Fuck,” Will was barely breathing already, trying not to come as soon as he felt Hannibal’s tongue against himself, working wonders.

Hannibal sucked him with all his might into the tight heat of his mouth, taking him deep and fast, lapping against his length, and Will had never had a blow job like this. He looked down

and met Hannibal's reverent gaze. He licked and sucked Will's cock like it was nectar from the gods, and they finally bestowed Hannibal the higher honor of savoring it.

"Slow… Down, not gonna last like this," he breathed out, biting at his lower lip.

Hannibal did slow down, but he didn't let go, instead, he hollowed his cheeks, and hummed against Will's impossibly hard cock. The way he looked, debauched and blissed out, and how he was overindulging on Will's cock didn't help at all, and Will's hips thrust up a bit. Finally, Hannibal let go with a lewd pop, when Will was seconds away from coming. But he continued stroking him lightly with his left hand, unwilling to let go.

Hannibal's fingers let go of massaging Will's balls and traveled lower, tentatively touching Will's ass, where he was most sensitive. He squirmed at the sensation.

"Can I finger you, my love?"

"Yes," Will said, voice trembling. He didn't know how that would feel, but he trusted Hannibal would make it incredible.

He quickly figured out that Hannibal wanted to make this experience different from all the other blowjobs he'd received in the past. It was working entirely, because Hannibal's mouth around him already felt like the best sex he ever had. Suddenly, Will felt his lube-slick fingers stroking at his hole, circling the rim.

It was a strange feeling, but having someone touch the most intimate part of him so gently made Will sensitive and warm all over. Loosening the tight ring of muscle, Hannibal slipped one finger inside, and let Will adjust to the intrusion, massaging him with care. He waited until Will relaxed and got comfortable, then carefully crooked his finger, looking for Will's prostate.

"Ah," Will arched off the bed, "Jesus, Hannibal…"

"You're so sensitive," Hannibal smiled. "What a blessing."

Hannibal slowly teased his finger in and out, and up and down, making sure Will felt it well, stretching him for another one. All the while Will was trembling, clenching at him. At the same time, Hannibal stroked his cock gently, as if that could relax him.

Just as Will was about to adjust to the furnace-hot feeling, Hannibal got a second slick finger in alongside the first, and at the same time leaned in, taking Will's cockhead in his mouth again.

"Fuck, yes," Will was trying his best to stay still, but all he wanted to do was fuck down on Hannibal's fingers and then up into his mouth.

Wasting no time, Hannibal sucked at him with even more vigor, scissoring his fingers and really stimulating Will's prostate. Will's hands were in his hair, pulling haphazardly and making a mess. Hannibal was touching him in ways he's never been touched before, so deep,

and hot, and wet, both his tongue and fingers. He felt exposed, vulnerable, but loved and adored at the same time.

Hannibal sped up his movements, really testing Will's sensitivity. It wasn't long before Will came with a shout of Hannibal's name, gripping at his hair so hard it must've hurt. Hannibal fingered him through it all, through every shaky jerk and moan, and swallowed every drop of him.

"God, Jesus. I'm so sorry," Will gasped between breaths, seeing how disheveled Hannibal was as he came down from the high, "Did I hurt you?"

"No. You were perfect," Hannibal said, licking some of Will's come from the corner of his mouth. Will couldn't help but stare — the image of it would be forever burned in Will's brain.

He then reached back up, laying right beside Will, and mouthed lightly at Will's neck and jaw. Still breathing fast, Will kissed him full on the lips, tasting himself on Hannibal's tongue.

"Does it always feel so good?" he whispered, feeling sated and warm.

"Not at all. Some men don't like it at all. I'm glad you enjoyed it," Hannibal kisses him back gently, his forehead and eyelids, "You look absolutely stunning, Will. I wish I could sketch you like this, so blissed out and gorgeous."

Will blushed even more. He looked down and saw Hannibal's erection poking from his pants, fully hard because of him. It seemed like Hannibal kept his hips at an angle, so as not to push into Will. He concentrated all of his efforts on bringing Will pleasure, neglecting his own arousal.

Will brought his hand down and shoved the damned pants away, to free him entirely. Hannibal's cock bobbed out and stood against his abdomen. Will reached to stroke him slowly, marveling at the feeling of another man's cock in his hand. It was bigger than his own, but somehow leaner. He was uncut and veiny, and Will's mouth salivated at the thought of blowing him. But he felt too exhausted to even stroke him properly, and his eyelids were heavy.

"I want to taste you, too," he whined, angry at the medicine for making him so sleepy.

"Rest," Hannibal said, making Will snuggle against him, "We have all the time in the world."

"Come on me, please," Will begged, "Wanna see your face when you come. I've been thinkin' about it."

"Have you? Will," Hannibal moaned. Will adored how his name sounded on Hannibal lips. Always worshipful.

"Please? Mark me. Wanna be yours," Will pleaded weakly, and finally saw Hannibal's resolve crumble.

He got a bit of lube and took himself in hand over Will. Then he started stroking furiously, with a desperation that Will didn't expect from him. It was as if Will allowed him to let go entirely, succumb to his arousal, and show himself, unrestrained. Hannibal looked majestic and beautiful, he was drinking at the sight of Will, eyes devouring Will's naked overheated body, desperately aroused because of Will.

"Fuck, just like that, just like that," Will was mumbling, and the encouragement made Hannibal growl. It didn't take long before he was coming, hot spurts painting Will's belly, getting in his pubic hair, marking him as Hannibal's.

"You're everything," Will mumbled, and reached up to lay a final kiss in the corner of Hannibal's mouth with his last crumbs of strength, before falling back down and dozing off.

***

Will woke up from the short nap unusually sated. He found out he had been cleaned and covered with the duvet. And Hannibal was in the kitchen, again. It was turning into a habit. Quickly getting dressed, Will went out looking for him.

The sleeves of Hannibal's long-sleeved pajama top were rolled up, the pants were hanging low, and he was busy preparing something for a late lunch.

Coming closer, Will put his arms around Hannibal's waist, kissed slowly at his shoulder and neck, savoring him. Marveling that now he could just do it. That Hannibal wanted him.

"My love," Hannibal sighed into the kisses.

"I'm sorry I fell asleep earlier. It's the side effects of the medication, I think? It makes me really sleepy."

"Nothing to be sorry about. You're still recovering. We should go slow."

"Don't wanna go slow," Will murmured, and Hannibal's head dropped against Will's shoulder. Will's hands sneaked down, toying with the waistband of Hannibal's pants. He saw Hannibal's cock twitch, saw him wince in oversensitivity. Will's fingers were just skirting at his belly, playing with the happy trail that led down to the overheated flesh.

"I wanna blow you so bad," he whispered in Hannibal's ear, feeling him shiver.

"Will, I just came half an hour ago, I'm not as young as…"

"Okay. But soon. Want you to come in my mouth," Will said, and Hannibal closed his eyes, desperately trying not to react. Will brought a palm down, cupping Hannibal very gently through his pants.

"God, who knew you were such a filthy boy?" Hannibal's hips thrust lightly against Will's hands.

Seeing Hannibal barely holding himself together was going to his head. "Will you feed me your cock later, stuff me full of it?" Will pushed further. He truly didn't know where that

dirty talk came from, he has never been one to talk during sex before. But at that moment he was still a bit hazed from his sleep, and completely drunk on Hannibal. Just his presence awakened something primal in Will.

“I promise,” Hannibal breathed hard, looking like he was inches away from rubbing his ass into Will’s crotch.

Will was debating falling down to his knees right then and there, but suddenly his phone rang.

He let out a huff of annoyance. Jack’s name flashed on the screen.

“Ah. The last person I want to talk to,” Will said bitterly.

“Let me?” Hannibal asked, still a bit breathless, but trying to compose himself quickly.

Will gave Hannibal his phone, curious as to what he would do. Hannibal pressed the receiving button.

“Will?” Jack’s booming voice was audible even without the speakerphone function.

“Jack, it’s Hannibal,” Hannibal said.

“Dr Lecter?...”

“I’m at Will’s house currently, taking care of him. Do you want me to pass a message?”

Will muffled a laugh, sensing the confusion on the other end of the line. Jack certainly wasn’t prepared for such a scenario.

“We really need him to come and take a look at the victim. The scene had to be cleaned out, but the victim is still at the morgue, and Will is the only person who can read them like books. Please tell him I expect to see him today.”

“Can’t be done. Will is too weak to go anywhere, and he has nightmares whenever he recalls consultations. He was getting better, but actually he had a terrible one tonight, I’m afraid. He needs to recover fully before he can resume work.”

There was a bit of silence, as surely Jack wondered how the hell Hannibal knew that Will had a nightmare during the night.

“Got it. Nonetheless, I’ll ask you to pass the message for me, Doctor Lecter.”

“Of course,” Hannibal said, and Will smiled at him.

When he hung up, Will hugged him again, and chastely kissed the corner of his mouth.

“Uncle Jack is relentless,” Hannibal sighed, enveloping Will back into a hug.

“The more he calls, the less I want to continue consulting.”

“You’ve been seriously thinking about stopping, right?”

“Yes. I… Yesterday I spent hours making fishing lures. I’ve already forgotten how good it feels to just shut off my brain and do something I enjoy. At the very least, I need some sort of vacation. I can’t go on having nightmares. I’m so glad you were there to calm me down yesterday. The visions are significantly less intense, and on some nights I don’t have them at all. So I just… Want to prioritize my needs.”

Hannibal smiled at him with genuine joy.

“That’s great news. But remember that you can also prioritize your wants. What would you like to do today?”

Will beamed at him, mirroring Hannibal’s joy.

“I want to go fishing. I’d like to show you my spot. We can take the dogs. And for dinner I’ll cook the fish we catch.”

“Sounds perfect, Will.”

Hannibal decided to pack the lunch he was preparing, sandwiches with cream cheese and salmon, and cut up some fruit and vegetables. They packed the rest of the needed items, including a blanket, fishing gear, and dog treats, and ventured outside. The weather was perfect, and the dogs were excited to go for a longer walk.

As they walked through the property, Will told Hannibal about Wolf Trap, and how he chose this place. He always loved the outdoors, but through his years of teaching at Quantico he numbed that part of himself, until the city started suffocating him.

“With my gift, constantly being around people is a curse,” he said, watching as Josie and Freya run ahead to the clearing.

“That’s why you prefer dogs.”

“But you don’t. You genuinely enjoy those socials. The opera nights and the fancy dinners.”

“I do, but not as much as you think I do," Hannibal said, pensive. “It was just the way I was raised. When I was 12 I came to live with my aunt and uncle in France. They were in the habit of hosting lavish balls and dinners. It was their way of life, and it got ingrained in me.”

“Why did you come to live with them?” Will asked, and saw Hannibal’s expression harden.

Hannibal said nothing for a long time, as they walked down the path.

“My parents and my sister Misha were killed.”

Sensing his sharp pain, Will reached for Hannibal’s hand, holding it in his own.

“I’m so sorry this happened to you. I had no idea.”

“I don’t tell this just to anyone, Will,” Hannibal squeezed his hand, “Back in Lithuania, we were descendants of a powerful family. We lived in a castle, my father was a Count. It felt like I had everything I ever wanted, that I was living in a fairy tale. Until I was left with nothing, alone, barely a teenager… It was a home invasion. My parents were killed on the spot. My sister managed to survive with me for a few days, until they took her away. And killed her too.”

They walked in silence, Will too stunned to say anything. He felt Hannibal grip his hand like a lifeline.

“After I arrived in Paris, I was mute for a few months. Attending dinners and balls was a way to reconnect with that life that was taken away from me. Social events have clear rules where I know how to be in control, how everyone should behave, what is expected and what is not. One of the many reasons I don’t tolerate rudeness. Over time, with the help of my aunt, I managed to heal enough to want to live again.”

Will stopped and turned to Hannibal, looking deeply into his eyes that were now full of pain. He hugged Hannibal close, feeling his own eyes welling up.

“I’m so glad you did,” Will whispered in his ear. He hoped Hannibal understood how honored he felt that Hannibal shared something so personal about his past, “Thank you for telling me. If you ever need to… To talk about it, you know you can tell me anything.”

“I think after almost 40 years, I made my peace with it. I don’t regret my life. Each choice has made me the man I am today, and has brought me here to you.”

“I feel the same. I don’t regret my past, even though it was harsh sometimes. Nothing compared to yours, though.”

As they walked further, hand in hand, Hannibal looked up at Will hesitantly.

“May I ask why you never talk about your mother, Will?”

“She left my dad when I was three years old. I barely remember her,” Will shrugged, “It bothered me, when I was a kid. Not having someone that all kids were supposed to have. But then I had bigger problems, and the pain kind of shifted to the background. My father was an alcoholic, so I had to focus on survival, rather than processing emotions.”

“I am constantly in awe that you became the man you are today with such little guidance from your parents. You have so much intelligence and love in your heart, I can hardly believe you’re real,” Hannibal squeezed his hand.

“I never thought about it like that.”

Only now, Will understood how desperately he yearned to have that unconditional love he deserved to have as a child. He wondered if Hannibal could ever understand how grateful Will felt for everything Hannibal had given him.

They walked through the woods, each immersed in their own thoughts. Will tried to commit to memory how he felt at that moment. Walking hand in hand with his favorite person in the whole world to one of his favorite spots. The dogs running around them at their feet, the leaves already turning into vivid autumn colors with bursts of orange, red, yellow all around them, and the fresh air chilly against his skin. In the midst of it all, the strongest emotion — feeling like he was rapidly falling head over heels in love, the magnitude of it all enhanced by the beauty of nature, shining on this bright autumn day from every corner.

Finally, they arrived at the stream. They had to cross a few tall bushes, and found themselves in a clearing with a tree. Hannibal spread out the blanket, and the dogs immediately rushed into the water, splashing and barking.

“They’ll calm down in a bit. Sorry if they’ll splash you too.”

“Nothing to be sorry about.”

“So. I usually come here in the early morning, because it’s easier to catch young trout then. But we’ll try our luck today, it’s high season for them, and I think our chances are pretty good.”

Soon enough they were standing in the water, each in a pair of waders and holding a rod, as Will explained the basics of fishing — what to pay attention to and what to avoid. They fished for half an hour, but then Hannibal kept sneaking glances at Will, instead of watching the rod or the water.

“You’re not gonna catch much, if you stare at me,” Will teased him.

“I’m trying to catch you,” Hannibal teased back.

“You already caught me, silly.”

“Like all professionals, you see much more than I do,” Hannibal sighed after another ten minutes. “You’ll have to teach me more about it and why it fascinates you, but right now I’d rather be admiring you from afar.”

“Not enjoying yourself?”

“I think I’m more of a hunter than a lurer,” Hannibal said.

“Suit yourself. Give me the rod, and you can go rest. I’ll join you as soon as I catch our dinner.”

Hannibal laid on the checkered blanket, resting his back against the tree, and took something out of a bag. The dogs, overexcited from the walk and brief game of splashing about in the cold water, sprawled down on the clearing all around him.

In another twenty minutes, Will finally caught a trout. The second and third followed closely, in another ten minutes.

He came out of the water with three fish flapping about in a bucket, and saw that Hannibal had been busy with his sketchpad.

The sketch of him looked much more beautiful than he felt in his old fishing clothes and mud-colored waders. His eyes were shining bright, and his curls caught the sun quite perfectly. Hannibal also did a great job on the water and the forest on the other side of the stream.

“Just admiring the view,” Hannibal said bashfully.

“I’m glad you still have something to admire even when I’m in my ratty fishing clothes.”

Will took off his waders and put down the fishing gear, then settled beside Hannibal. He leaned his head on Hannibal’s shoulder to study the sketch of him closer, and suddenly realized that what Hannibal was holding was quite a thick sketchpad.

“May I see it?”

“I’d rather you didn’t.”

“You know that just makes me wanna see it more,” Will grinned, “What do you have there that’s so bad?”

“I just don’t think you’ll be pleased,” Hannibal sighed, but gave Will the sketchbook with a resigned look.

What he discovered were pages upon pages of himself. Most of them were sketches from Hannibal’s office. There were a few tasteful nudes, just artistic, nothing vulgar, but they still made him warm all over. Quite a few drawings recreating scenes from famous classical art.

“I’m… Shocked. How do you see such beauty in me?” Will felt the intensity of Hannibal’s feelings stare at him from pages upon pages of immaculate sketches. If he had any doubts about Hannibal’s confession that morning, he was now holding the evidence that it was all genuine.

“I’m surprised you don’t see it yourself.”

Closer to the beginning there were also drawings of beautiful architecture that Will guessed was located in Italy and France, and a few sketches of people Will has never seen. But there was a small girl that Will instantly recognized.

“She has your features,“ Will breathed out, stunned, “She’s beautiful.”

“Mischa.” Hannibal nodded, “I often wonder what she would look like as a grown woman, but I just can’t imagine it. She’s always frozen in time for me.”

Will placed a hand on top of Hannibal’s.

“I’m sure she’d be as gorgeous as you are. Those cheekbones, and eyes, and fine hair.”

Hannibal smiled gratefully, squeezed Will's thumb.

"And who is this?"

"My aunt Lady Murasaki and her warden Chiyoh."

"Do you keep in contact with them?"

"Occasionally with Chiyoh. Sometimes she helps me run some errands. But I'm afraid my aunt doesn't want to see me anymore."

"What happened?"

Hannibal stayed silent for a bit, gathering his thoughts. Will almost regretted asking, but then Hannibal nodded to himself.

"I was a deeply disturbed child. My aunt and uncle didn't know how to deal with my trauma. My uncle also died soon afterward, of a terminal illness. And my aunt was quite young, she wasn't prepared to take care of me. Some things I did shocked her. After I applied to medical school and went to study in Italy, she cut contact with me. I never saw her again."

"Even more trauma," Will murmured, heart breaking for Hannibal.

"I learned to rely only on myself after that. I organized my life how I would see it benefit me in the best way. Thanks to my privileged financial situation, it's been a pleasurable life, but I always yearned to find someone to share it with. Someone who could be my equal. I can admit now, that even surrounded by people, I felt incredibly lonely. Until I met you."

"I have… No idea what you see in me," Will breathed out, "You constantly manage to stun me."

"The feeling is mutual."

Hannibal unpacked the lunch. Turns out he also brought some proper food for the dogs. They all ate together, two men and six dogs, spread on the blanket. Hot tea in the thermos and sandwiches. With the sun beginning to set over the horizon, the sky colored in warm shades of orange, and the light illuminated the trees and bushes around them, playing on the surface of the water. Every little detail around them gradually turned soft and inviting.

"Golden hour is my favorite time of day, just before darkness falls. Crimson red skies. It reminds me of…"

"What?"

"Death," Hannibal said, and Will shivered. It was an odd thing to say, but Will understood completely. "The death of the day. When life turns to ash, but with a glorious farewell before disappearing forever. And then death comes, dark and soft. It's a transformation that never fails to fascinate me."

“It’s my favorite time to be here.” Will murmured, then got up from Hannibal’s shoulder, wondering if he wasn’t sore from him leaning over for so long, “It feels like I’m always sleeping on you.”

“I don’t mind it at all.”

The cold air was getting to them slowly. Will briefly warmed his hands in Hannibal’s, and then they started gathering their things.

“You looked truly glorious when you caught those fish,” Hannibal said, glancing at their future dinner in the bucket.

“I hope you’ll enjoy them,” Will tilted it away from the dogs, especially Charlie, who was trying to stick his nose in the bucket.

They walked back to the house hand in hand, the dogs at their feet, as darkness slowly spread all around them.

* * *

After having changed, Will busied himself with the fish.

“Does your arm still hurt? Do you need help?” Hannibal asked.

“I’ve been popping those pills like crazy, and it’s honestly much better. It hurts sometimes, but I can manage.”

“Then, if you don’t mind, I’ll take a shower while you prepare dinner.”

“Sure, go ahead. I’ve got it all covered.”

Will heard the shower start, and imagined Hannibal naked under the water. Fuck, he really wanted to abandon it all, and join him under the hot stream. He’d be all soapy and naked, wet hair, glistening skin, flexing muscles… But Will was trying to be a gentleman. He promised Hannibal dinner, and he really hoped it would turn out as delicious as possible. Everything else would have to wait.

He had already gutted the fish, and was about to start marinating it with spices, when his phone rang. Beverly’s name flashed on the screen, so Will squeezed his phone between his shoulder and ear, as he continued working on the fish with both hands.

“Will, hi.”

“Bev, I’m glad you called.”

“Missed me?”

“Yes.”

“Want me to come over now?”

“No,” Will grinned.

“Hey! Rude.”

“Nothing personal. It’s just that Hannibal… Hannibal is staying over,” Will breathed out, prepared for the questions.

“Oh my god, he’s ‘Hannibal’ now?” Beverly gasps. “For real? Is it happening?”

“I guess it already happened. He’s been with me most of the time. Today we went fishing together, and now I’m cooking him dinner,” Will confessed.

“Will, honey, you sound so happy I can’t even mock you,” Will sensed Beverly smiling back at him.

“So anyway,” Will laughed breathlessly, and his eyes suddenly landed on the flower vase, “I was wondering if you could help me figure something out. Maybe ask Price if he’s near. It seems to be his kind of thing…”

“What?”

“What do red chrysanthemums mean? In the language of flowers.”

“Oh, so you’ve seen the file?” she asked immediately, and Will frowned in confusion. In that exact moment, Apollo jumped on him, trying to get to the gutted insides of the fish. Will shoved the mutt away and mumbled:

“*No, Bad, bad Apollo*! — What file?” There seemed to be some shuffling and voices on Beverly’s end too.

“Oh, Price? Come here. Yeah, Price was just telling me. Red chrysanthemums mean love and deep passion. Basically, it’s a confession of love.”

“Oh…” he looked at the flowers on the table and felt something bloom inside his chest.

“Yeah, *oh*. Quite unusual-…”

“I think I’m in love with him, Bev,” Will said, heart squeezing painfully in his chest.

“Dr Hotass?”

“Please don’t call him that.”

“Fine, fine. I’m really happy for you, Will. All jokes aside. You deserve to be happy.”

“I do,” he whispered.

“So how has your arm been?”

“Much better, I haven’t felt it at all today. I guess I’m healing.”

“Of course! It’s the power of lo-o-ove!”

Beverly teased him some more, until eventually it was time to put the fish with chopped potatoes in the oven and get started on a side salad. Will hung up with a smile on his face.

Hannibal emerged just in time, wearing his pajama pants and a t-shirt that fit him just right.

“God,” Will groaned out loud at the sight of him, “Why do you never wear form-fitting clothes in everyday life?”

“Based on your reaction, I should wear them more often,” Hannibal came to hug Will at the waist, putting his head on Will’s shoulder. The hug was so cozy and warm, and Hannibal smelled fresh after the shower. Will half-turned to pull him in a deep kiss.

“I’d love that, but actually I’d never get anything done. Now shoo! I need this dish to be perfect. I’m trying to impress my favorite chef.”

Hannibal obliged reluctantly. Will forbade him to prepare the table too. Soon enough Hannibal was on the couch, busy doing something on his ipad, probably catching up on some overdue work.

While putting out napkins and plating the food, Will couldn’t help but sneak a peek at Hannibal, looking so domestic in his casual clothes, with Will’s dogs laying all around him. He had no idea how they got to this point, but Will wanted nothing more for his future.

“Dinner’s ready, darlin’,” he said, and watched Hannibal’s eyes soften at the pet name.

“Smells delicious. And your dogs agree with me,” Hannibal said, coming to sit at his usual table, as the whole gang followed him, wagging their tails.

“It’s the only semi-fancy thing I cook, and they know they’ll get a treat too,” Will said, “Calm down, guys, there’s enough for everyone.”

At dinner, the conversation flowed easily, and Will often caught sight of the red chrysanthemums. Beverly’s words echoed in his mind. *Deep love, passion*.

Hannibal seemed to eat with genuine appetite, and complemented the food more than once.

“You don’t have to be that nice. It’s got nothing on your stuff.”

“I’m telling the truth, Will. If it were me, I’d add some balsamic vinegar to the salad, but it’s actually perfect the way it is. The freshness of the fish adds to the flavor. It’s exquisite.”

After dinner, they cleaned the table and did the dishes in absolute sync, moving as one. Will dried them and put them away, as he came to the conclusion that this day was perfect. He couldn't wait to have many more days like this one.

“Thank you for dinner, my love,” Hannibal said, sneaking his hands to hold Will at the waist, “It’s been a while since someone cooked for me, and I enjoyed it a lot.”

“I enjoy… You a lot.” Will confessed. “I never thought I’d like sharing my space with someone else that much, but you just fit in my life. I can’t understand it. Before, I couldn’t even imagine you in my house. Yours is so much more… you.”

“Mine was customized for all the things I want and need. But I enjoy being in yours for the same reason that I enjoyed dinner. It’s nice to feel vulnerable with someone else, to share something new with them, something that holds meaning. Today has been absolutely perfect.”

“I have been thinking the exact same thing.” Will said, wrapping his hands around Hannibal’s neck, and looking into his eyes, getting lost in their color.

His heart was thumping, and he wanted nothing more than for Hannibal to kiss him.

“But there’s one thing that would make it better,” Will murmured, tracing a teasing finger down the sensitive skin of Hannibal’s neck.

“Is there?”

He must’ve been staring at Hannibal with such unhidden lust in his eyes, that Hannibal lunged at him. He kissed Will almost hungrily, like he’s been waiting to do it all day.

They stumbled in the living room, kissing and kissing, without stopping to breathe.

Will kicked the door closed, so the dogs wouldn't disturb them, and Hannibal immediately pinned him against it, mouthing down the column of his throat.

“What would you like tonight?” he whispered in Will’s ear.

“I… Anything,” Will said, “I’m so horny for you, you have no idea. I literally just have to see you in a t-shirt, and I’m a goner.”

Hannibal grinned, satisfied with the answer.

“You’re still recovering, so nothing extreme,” Hannibal said, and then looked Will right in the eyes, “How would you like to be inside me?”

Will’s brain went in tilt, and his hips shot up against Hannibal’s in response.

“I take it as a yes.”

“I didn’t… Think you’d want that,” Will said, already a mess at the mere thought.

“I want you in any way I can have you Will,” Hannibal said.

“I can’t promise it will be good for you. Or that I’ll last long.”

“You’re incredibly better already than anyone else could’ve been. You make me feel like I’ve never felt before,” Hannibal murmured, calming Will’s anxious thoughts.

“The feeling is mutual.”

Hannibal’s open-mouthed kisses made Will’s blood boil. With great effort, Will managed to grip at his biceps, and nudge him towards the bed, shove him down on it, and crawl on top. He kissed Hannibal with burning passion, but quickly figured out that holding himself up on his arms was still a bit painful. Of course, Hannibal noticed his discomfort, and rolled them around, getting on top of Will and pinning him down to the mattress, kneeling on either side of Will’s hips.

“Why do you always have to wear so many clothes? Get naked now,” Will whined, shoving Hannibal’s shirt and pants away.

“Demanding thing,” Hannibal laughed, but obliged.

They undressed each other between kisses, until finally they were both naked, half-hard cocks rubbing against each other. Will took them in hand, barely able to close his hand around both of them, and started stroking to full hardness, loving the way Hannibal moaned over him each time the head of his dick caught against Hannibal’s foreskin. His other hand was caressing Hannibal’s back, until he reached behind and cupped his ass, loving the tight roundness of it.

“Let me get you ready?” he asked, breathless.

“Yes, please,” Hannibal said, eyes closed, surrendering to the feeling.

Reluctantly letting go of their cocks, Will got the lube from the night stand. He really wanted to make it good for Hannibal. He coated his fingers generously and reached behind to find the overheated skin of Hannibal’s hole. Caressing him gently around the rim, he watched Hannibal’s face for any signs of discomfort, and finding none. Slowly and carefully, he slipped a finger inside the tight heat, massaging Hannibal thoroughly. He was so tight and hot, just using one finger on him was making Will incredibly hard. He tried to crook his finger just like Hannibal did it to him, hoping to find that sensitive spot.

“Am I hurting you?”

“No, you can add more.”

Will wondered how it would feel to have his cock nudging at his prostate, deep inside of Hannibal, making him feel that intense pleasure.

“Can’t wait to be inside you,” he murmured, taking in Hannibal’s face scrunched up in pleasure as he pressed against him more insistently, adding a second finger in.

“Fuck yes,” Hannibal let his head fall back, mouth open with those lips, cherry-red from kissing.

Will had never heard Hannibal swear, and it made his cock twitch, and his fingers work with even more vigor. He wanted to *wreck* him entirely.

His arm was starting to hurt from all the effort and the awkward angle, but he ignored it. He wanted it to be perfect for Hannibal. He added more lube, and Hannibal hissed as he felt it pour at his overheated crack. Gradually, Will added a third finger, stretching Hannibal good and slow, hitting his prostate every now and again, and marveling at the way Hannibal started thrusting back on his fingers, moving over him.

“I’m ready, Will,” Hannibal said, breathless and desperate, gripping at Will’s cock like he couldn’t wait for it to be inside of him.

Will took himself too, clasping their hands together, and Hannibal rose up a bit and shuffled forward. They nudged Will’s cock against his hole. It felt a bit too big at the rim, but Hannibal shoved his hand away and slowly started to sink down on him. With every inch, Will felt like he was moments from dying and going to heaven. Finally, Hannibal got the full length of Will inside, with a satisfied moan of utter pleasure.

“God, Hannibal,” Will echoed his moan too. It was not the same as with a woman. Hannibal was heavier, tighter, hotter, clamping on him. His balls were dragging against Will, and his dick was so hard and upturned, and leaking at the tip. He was a perfect vision of masculinity, and Will felt utterly blessed to witness him in full glory above him.

Holding at his hips possessively, Will loved the way Hannibal fucked himself on Will’s cock, with a steady, relentless rhythm. He was in need to fuck him hard and rough and fast, but the last thing he wanted to do was hurt him. And Hannibal was taking the lead, flexing his thighs, moving up and down over Will’s dick, enjoying him slowly and thoroughly, biting his lip to keep from moaning too loud.

As he adjusted to the stretch, Hannibal opened his eyes and watched him the entire time, eyes full of passion and lust, and Will felt like he was on fire.

Will was breathing fast, working his hips to meet Hannibal halfway, and at the same time gripping Hannibal’s hips with his hands, holding onto him with all his might.

“Not… gonna… last,” Will mumbled, punctuating every word with a thrust, and Hannibal rode him well, gaining speed.

Hannibal grinned.

“Come up,” he commanded, and urged Will to rise up. Suddenly they were face to face, and Hannibal kept him in place with the spread of his palm on Will’s back, and was still staring at him like he was the most beautiful thing in the whole world.

It felt even more intimate like this, Hannibal in his lap, his huge cock trapped between their bellies. He leaned in to kiss Will, slow and sensual, and Will thought that this was what was missing from utter bliss. He moaned against his lips, brows knit tight.

Savoring the feeling for a few deep thrusts, Will thought about how much he loved the way Hannibal’s cock twitched against his belly with every brush of his cockhead against Hannibal’s sensitive prostate. He didn’t want it to end, but the disheveled noises Hannibal was making, and the utter devotion on his face were enough to make him come.

With a cry, he spilled inside of Hannibal, filling him deep with frantic jerks. Hannibal followed soon, coming on the next deep thrust with a long moan of Will's name. The sheer depth of Hannibal's emotions that Will picked up with his gift made tears well in the corners of his eyes.

He was still coming down from the high, when he felt Hannibal's finger sweep under his eye.

"Are you okay?"

Only then, Will realized that he was full-on crying.

"It's so intense with you," he managed, as Hannibal slowly laid him back down.

Taking great care, Hannibal got off his cock, wincing a bit at the stretch and the mess. Then he took Will in his arms, stroking all over his body, and watched him closely.

"My empathy is killing me right now. I can feel everything you're feeling. So my feelings are doubled, it's intense as hell," tears were still spilling and Will's heart felt like it was about to burst.

"My love," Hannibal kissed him sweetly, sighing with gratitude, "I usually try to shield my emotions, but I can't hold them back anymore, not when we're intimate."

"It's never been like this for me," Will said. "I guess no one I ever slept with cared for me as much as you care for me. I never thought about this. Just reckoned sex was a bit overrated."

Hannibal held him even closer.

"I understand. I didn't have many partners, and most of the sex I had was performative, like everything in my life. I've never felt like this either, Will."

Will momentarily wished he was younger and healthier so he could roll Hannibal over and ride him too, but moving was too difficult of a task right now. His arm was still hurting from fingering Hannibal so thoroughly, but it was worth it.

"I dread the moment you're going to leave this bed," Will sighed, leaning even closer into Hannibal, breathing in his scent of sweat and sex.

"I will stay with you tonight," Hannibal promised. "But I'm afraid eventually I'll have to go sort some things at home."

"I'll miss you then."

"Do you have any plans for tomorrow?"

Will traced some patterns on Hannibal's chest, pensive. There was one thing that irritated him, one thing that was constantly on the back of his mind. He wished it would go away, so he could enjoy his newfound life in peace and start planning for the future he actually wanted. He hated that at this moment he was thinking about it, but he couldn't help it.

“I think I’ll go to see the Ripper’s victim tomorrow. There is a good chance that it was him, from what Jack told me. More than anything, I want this whole thing to be over with. Not that it’s guaranteed, but at least I hope to get some closure. I feel like I can’t quit while he’s around.”

Hannibal’s expression turned unreadable. Will could sense some disappointment. Anxiety, maybe? Of course Hannibal would be anxious for the fact that Will could get re-triggered, Will’s health was his constant concern.

“If you’ve decided.”

“Yes.”

“Then I’ll go home tomorrow, to give you space. You may call me when you’re ready to see me.”

It sounded weird, but Will nodded, sleepy. He stroked Hannibal’s fine soft hair, and cradled him close to his heart. He fell asleep soon afterwards.

Secondo

Will woke up from the sunshine seeping through the windows. He was under the covers, but still completely naked. Hannibal must've cleaned him with a wet cloth, and the thought of it made his skin tingle.

Through the drowsiness, he heard the shower going. A smile spread on his face. In a moment, he decided that today he would indulge his cravings. He got up, not bothering to get dressed, and went into the bathroom. Thankfully, Hannibal left the door open.

His fantasy from the previous day was a feeble imitation of how hot Hannibal looked — he was soaking under the hot stream of water, surrounded by steam, his skin all glistening with water and soap.

Unaware of Will's heated gaze studying him, Hannibal was washing himself, so Will took a moment to admire his naked form.

Suddenly he turned, and their eyes locked.

"Will. What an unexpected surprise."

"Oh, don't give me that. You wanted me here. Left the door open," Will said, climbing into the shower, and closing the door behind him.

"Maybe I did," Hannibal teased, enveloping Will into a soapy, wet hug.

Will's hand immediately spread on Hannibal's chest, touching him everywhere. Their bodies met, and they both felt Will's hardening cock nudge against Hannibal's hip.

"God, I don't know what's up with me. I've never been so insatiable before," Will confessed against Hannibal's skin, "I feel like a teenager I never got to be."

"Will, I'm yours. You can do anything you want with me," Hannibal said.

"You make me crazy," Will leaned in and kissed him, full on the mouth, "I want you all the damn time," he said in between more hungry kisses.

The water soaked Will's curls, caressing him together with Hannibal's touches. It felt so nice, he could purr.

His hands slipped lower and lower on Hannibal's body, past the tight muscle and the soft belly, and the coarse hair, to where Hannibal was just beginning to react. With intention, Will gripped Hannibal's soft cock, starting to stroke him. He loved the way it filled and hardened in his hand, loved the soap making it wonderfully slick.

Never in a million years he would get used to how good it felt to hold the manifestation of Hannibal's arousal for him. He wanted to choke on it. He wanted it deep inside himself.

“My Will. I want you all the time too. I’m looking forward to have you in all the ways I can,” Hannibal’s hands were caressing his broad back, tracing patterns and committing the feeling of Will’s soft skin to memory.

“And now? How do you want me?” Will managed, half-coherent, his own dick throbbing almost painfully with all the blood that was rushing south. Hannibal’s words were like honey, and Will couldn’t get enough of them.

“Against the shower wall,” Hannibal growled, his hands reaching lower to cup at the globes of Will’s ass, making him moan.

“God, yes,” Will’s head fell on Hannibal’s shoulder.

Steady and slow, his soapy fingers found Will’s crack, started stroking him there, paying attention to his entrance where he was most sensitive.

“Turn around for me, love?”

Unable to resist himself, Will gave Hannibal a sweet and dirty kiss, then turned around to press his overheated face against the cold tile. He bent over a bit, his desires winning over any shame, then pressed both hands against the shower wall to steady himself against it.

“Fuck me, Hannibal,” he begged, feeling so hot he thought he might come if Hannibal even laid a finger on him. His legs were trembling with anticipation and fear, as he never did anything like that before. But he trusted Hannibal, and he knew that he’d make it good for both of them.

“My boy, I’m not going to make love to you like this for our first time,” Hannibal said, bending over Will, covering his back, and Will loved the weight of him, “I’ll make it good and comfortable, and will make it last.”

Will exhaled, pressing his back into Hannibal’s front, impatient.

“Just… Give me anything, please. But d-don’t come.”

“Hmm?”

“You promised me something the other day,” Will heard Hannibal inhale sharply, as he remembered their encounter in the kitchen.

In a moment, Will felt Hannibal’s dick nudge against his ass, and how his hands spread him open to get better access. Hannibal did everything with precision and care, and this was no exception. Soon enough, Hannibal slowly fucked between his cheeks, his cockhead occasionally catching on the rim. The soap made it all so much more hot and slippery.

Will had no idea that was even a thing, but his own dick throbbed at every thrust. He stuck out his ass even more, and felt Hannibal’s hand come up and grip both of his. He brought them up and pinned them over Will’s head. Now Will was utterly trapped, and he absolutely adored the feeling of it.

“Do you like it?” Hannibal whispered in his ear, barely audible through the water.

Will could only moan in response. Hannibal leaned down to kiss and suck on his shoulder and the side of his neck, no doubt leaving hickeys. He was thrusting faster and faster, one hand gripping Will’s at the wrists, and the other squeezing his hip.

The warm shower water and the steam made it all even hotter, and Will was already close. Hannibal slowed down after a bit, a shuddering breath signifying how close he was too.

“Put your legs together, please.”

Will obliged. He felt like Hannibal could command him to do anything, and he’d do it without hesitation. Almost instantly, he felt Hannibal’s cock rub between his thighs, nudging his balls on every thrust. This felt incredible too, and Will’s own neglected dick was aching with hardness, leaking precum. He needed something, anything against it.

“Let me…” Will begged, hands struggling in the grip, feeling like if he couldn’t get a hand on himself soon he’d burst.

Getting the hint, Hannibal freed him, but instead of giving Will control, brought his own hand around and gripped at his cock, enveloping him in a tight heat. It felt so big, that it covered most of Will’s length as he started stroking fast. The other hand was still possessively gripping at his hip, keeping Will in place, so he’d not fall down from the intensity of Hannibal’s thrusts and jerks.

Almost unconsciously, Will was moaning Hannibal’s name with a mix of oh fuck and oh yes, impossibly turned on. Hannibal flickered at his slit on every other stroke, and Will felt his balls tighten. In seconds, he came all over the shower wall, crying out from the intensity of it all, as Hannibal milked every drop of him.

Too fucked-out to stand, Will slipped down and dropped to his knees. Breathing harshly, he turned around just enough to see Hannibal squeezing at the base of his own dick, head dropped back and eyes closed, trying to keep his promise to Will and not come on the spot.

Towering over Will, in all his naked and aroused glory — just the sight of Hannibal was enough for Will’s oversensitive cock to twitch. With a force he didn’t expect from himself, he manhandled Hannibal to lean against the wall, and wasted no time gripping Hannibal’s cock. He opened his mouth wide, and looked up just in time to see Hannibal staring at him, his own mouth open in shock and arousal.

Hannibal was… impressive. Obviously, Will had never had a dick in his mouth before, and he thought that it’d be a bit of a learning curve to start with one so huge. His hand gripping at the base barely covered half of him. Squeezing him tight, he started by mouthing at the balls, taking each of them in his mouth, rolling them on his tongue, and occasionally looking up at Hannibal’s wrecked face to check his reactions.

“Jesus, Will,” Hannibal’s hands flew to his hair, buried in his curls.

With a shuddering breath, Will tentatively licked at the head, savoring the tangy taste of Hannibal's precome. Hannibal's hands tightened in his hair, so Will felt encouraged to continue — licking and kissing down the shaft and helping himself with his hand too. He relaxed his mouth enough to get the whole head in, and paid attention to the teeth.

It was a bit awkward to kneel on the cold tile of his shower, with the water spraying over him, but Will ignored all the discomforts. He desperately wanted to give the absolute maximum pleasure to Hannibal, and judging by his quickened breaths and hushed swears, it was working.

Getting more bold, he sucked his hard length further inside his mouth, until it was hitting the back of his throat. It was a bit hard to breathe like this, but the way Hannibal moaned out loud was the biggest encouragement to continue. Will urged him to fuck in and out, just a bit, and jerked him at the base with his hand too.

"Fuck, Will, I'm… I'm" Hannibal's hand squeezed in his hair, wanting to shove Will away, but he succeeded only in part. He came all over Will's face, painting his cheeks and chin in streaks of white, while some of it landed in his mouth.

Breathing harshly, Hannibal dropped to his knees too. Will immediately enveloped him in a tight hug, getting warm against that hot body of his.

"Forgive me, but I can't believe you never did that before," Hannibal breathed out, kissing Will's face. He licked his own come away from him, and washed the rest of it under the shower water, "You were divine."

"I still can't believe you know how to swear," Will said, a mix of shame and pleasure, "It's so hot. That I can make you lose control like that."

"You have no idea how much you make me lose control."

They kissed, sated and happy, until the position was too uncomfortable on both their knees. Will made an effort to stand up. He helped Hannibal up too, and they cleaned each other thoroughly, stealing gentle kisses in the afterglow. Hannibal's wet hair sticking to his forehead made him look at least ten years younger, and Will couldn't help but giggle.

As they got out of the shower, Will watched Hannibal wrap a towel around himself. There went another image that he would remember and treasure forever.

"I need to shave, and get ready. I've skipped my routine for the past few days, and I have an appointment with an important colleague today. I'll join you soon," Hannibal said apologetically.

"Take your time, darlin'," Will said, drying himself and putting on the robe. He didn't know how he lived without it before. Now it was his favorite item of clothing.

Just as Will walked out of the bathroom, giddy and blissful, the phone rang. He sighed, as he knew exactly who it was. He went into the kitchen to start on the breakfast and feed the dogs, and at the same time pressed the receiving button.

“Will,” Jack’s booming voice echoed in the speaker.

“Yes, Jack.”

“How are you feeling?”

“Still recovering, I’m afraid.”

He knew Jack was about to pressure him into coming to Quantico, and this time he thought he might accept. He wasn’t lying the previous night, he craved resolution with the Ripper case. It seemed to be an unfinished business he really wanted to deal with, before resigning for good. He thought that Campbell might give him new insights, and that he’d be the last chance he’d give himself to catch the Ripper.

“You know why I’m calling.”

“I know, I know, Jack…-”

“Look, how about I just send you the photos for now, and the case file,” Jack said impatiently, “Take it easy. Just look at it when you have time, tell me what you think. Alright?”

It was surprising that Jack would be satisfied with Will just looking at evidence from afar. Hannibal’s defense yesterday probably lessened his resolve. But it seemed like he still needed something, anything from Will to keep the ball rolling on the investigation.

“Okay. I could do photos, I guess.”

“It’s much appreciated, Will. You know you’re the best we got.”

Will hung up and shook his head. Photos were way better than driving all the way to Quantico. But still not ideal. He doubted he could figure out something just from them. Being in the presence of crimes is what really set his empathy off. Still, it didn’t hurt to try.

Hannibal entered the kitchen when Will was feeding the dogs.

“Jack called,” Will said.

“I see,” Hannibal replied, his face turning somber. He came closer to Will, and helped him pour their coffee.

“What’s wrong?”

For a moment, Hannibal looked taken aback. Then he probably remembered the power of Will’s gift.

“Nothing. Just don’t want to be away from you,” he said, leaning closer into Will and enveloping him in a hug.

“Me neither,” Will said, inhaling his fresh scent from the shower.

They stayed embraced, until Hannibal said quietly:

“Sometimes… It feels like you’re too good to be true. That if I leave, the thing we created here will shatter.”

The sheer vulnerability in his voice made something heavy drop in Will’s stomach.

“Hannibal. It won’t.”

“You can’t know it.”

“I won’t allow it,” Will said fiercely, clutching at Hannibal’s shirt. “Finally I know what it’s like to be happy. I won’t allow anything to take this away from me. I can’t imagine a situation where I wouldn’t want to be with you.”

Hannibal seemed to be on the verge of tears. He didn’t look entirely convinced, so Will kissed him deeply, stroking the side of his face.

“I have to get going, I'm afraid, I’m already late. Call me when you’re ready to see me,” Hannibal said as they broke the kiss. Will thought that turn of phrase was kind of odd. He suddenly remembered that Hannibal said the same thing last night when they were falling asleep. It was strange, because Hannibal should’ve known by now that Will was always ready to see him.

He watched Hannibal say goodbye to his dogs, really pet them one by one, whispering something to each of them. Will was glad to see Hannibal getting attached to his dogs as well. Not one of his previous lovers made the effort.

When Hannibal left, having taken a sandwich and the coffee in a thermos, Will went back to the kitchen and cleaned up. He changed the bed sheets, started up the laundry, and tried to get rid of the dog fur from the couch. He needed a clean slate of mind to go back into the gruesome world of his work.

Once the house looked half presentable, he made himself a coffee and sat on the couch, got out his laptop. There were new incoming emails with attachments from Jack.

He opened them up one by one, skimmed the case file first.

He read fast and noted the main points — Barry Campbell, male, white, 52 years old. Killed six women aged 16 to 34. Attacked Will a week ago when he stumbled upon his underground lab. Was found dead in the parking lot of a church two nights ago. His eyes were ejected, clothes removed, torso cut lengthwise, and internal organs removed. His right arm was cut off entirely. Red flowers were put in all the cuts, including the eyes, which resembled blood.

With a sudden anxious feeling in his stomach, Will clicked on the photos.

Campbell’s face was drained of all the blood, it looked pale like the moon. He was naked and butchered. But the thing that immediately drew the eye were the flowers. They were everywhere, sticking up from his wounds and openings, where pools of his blood should’ve been. Hundreds of them. Suffocating him, growing out of him, killing him.

Red chrysanthemums.

Will's eyes widened.

He looked at the photos, and then glanced on the table in the kitchen just a few feet away from him, then back at the photos. The vase was still there, the flowers — identical.

It was so obvious he didn't even need to read the case file again.

With trembling hands, he opened another file on his computer, where he gathered notes on his profile of the Ripper, starting over a year ago.

As he read the words he wrote himself, Will's pulse sped up and heart missed beats.

Sophisticated. Likely, a foreigner. Appreciates classical art. Skillful with a knife, doctor, or a surgeon. Has been killing forever, good at hiding evidence. Always pays attention to details. Does not kill for wealth gain, collects organs as trophies.

It all clicked into place fast, and Will felt himself shake in shock.

Hannibal has been the Chesapeake Ripper all along.

Now that the idea was in his mind, it was so obvious Will felt like a fool for not realizing it sooner.

It made sense for Hannibal to hide in plain sight. He was so upper-class and educated, a socialite with a pristine reputation. The professionality left no doubts — he was an esteemed psychiatrist, top in his field. No one in his right mind would suspect him of committing such monstrosities.

Will jumped to his feet, and started pacing the room, as more and more details emerged in his mind.

Campbell was killed and displayed two nights ago.

Two nights ago, when Hannibal told Will he had to sort something at home, and that Will shouldn't worry about Campbell, he went and killed him, then stuffed him full of his proclamation of love for Will.

The motive was simple. No one hurt Will, while Hannibal was around. He even made a point of cutting off Campbell's right arm, the same one that Will now felt pulsing with phantom hurt because of Campbell's gunshot wound. An ultimate confession of deep, passionate love. The flowers said it all. Case closed.

Should he call Jack? Turn Hannibal in?

Will sat heavily behind his lure-making desk, face in both hands, and stared at his phone.

Ironically, his first instinct was to call Hannibal. It was weird, but no one could console him and calm him down in the whole world how Hannibal could. He needed Hannibal to hug him

and tell him it was going to be okay. Even though Hannibal was one of the most dangerous serial killers in the world.

Will took a deep breath, trying to calm his buzzing mind, but now that the gears were set in motion, he couldn't stop thinking about all the details that managed to escape him over the months of intense work, and intense communication with Hannibal.

Why did Hannibal kill? Vengeance? What did he do with all the trophies?

At that moment, Will's eyes fell on the cream-colored card that he left on the desk just the other day, purely for sentimental reasons. *Heart with scrambled eggs*. Hannibal never specified whom the heart belonged to. Technically, he didn't lie.

Even that was so obvious, Will resisted the urge to laugh. All those fancy dinner parties. All that cooking. Never vegetarian.

The thought should've made him sick, but it didn't.

He's been eating people, probably since one of his first meetings with Hannibal, and yet, the only thing that shocked him was how blind he had been through it all.

Little by little, Will understood that what he was feeling now was a deep sense of relief. Finally, it all made sense. Above everything, he craved closure in the Ripper case, and now he got it.

He missed Hannibal so much he could cry.

Will snuggled into the red robe. Red like Hannibal's flowers for him. Red like the blood of Barry Campbell. Red like the meat that Hannibal prepared him with sauces and salads and sides.

The love of his life was a cannibalistic serial killer.

Technically, Will was a cannibal and a killer too. He thought about how good it felt to kill Hobbs. How he fantasized about it during sleepless nights, recalling the feeling of righteousness and euphoria, the simple pleasure of taking an undeserving life. Would he ever do it again, consciously?

He needed time to think.

Call me when you're ready to see me.

Of course, now this phrase made perfect sense too.

It was after dark when he became aware of how late it was. Charlie was licking at his hand, and the other dogs also gathered all around him, craving attention and food. He hasn't eaten anything for the whole day, and forgot to take his medication.

As his stomach growled, he realized that he really needed to eat, but first, there was a phone call to make.

He dialed Jack's number, and told him in a steady voice that it was definitely religious. The flowers symbolized the blood of Christ, who died for mankind's sins. It was not the Ripper, but most likely a copycat, inspired by his work, someone with a catholic background. He wondered if Jack could sense the lies in his voice, but when they hung up, Jack seemed satisfied with Will's theory.

Having hung up, Will stared at his own reflection in the dark window.

It was done. He chose his path. He felt elated and scared, excited for what the future held for them both. With a simple phone call, he altered the boring and predictable rest of life, choosing love and violence above else. There was no going back now.

As he looked at the shadows on his lawn, he thought that now it was too late to call Hannibal. Tomorrow will be a new day, and Will was ready for a new start.

Contorno

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next morning, Will woke up refreshed. No dreams or nightmares visited him during the night, and he felt calm and resolute.

He got up, got dressed in jeans and a long-sleeved shirt, then fed and walked the dogs, ate his breakfast and took the medicine. His arm felt as good as new.

Then he sat at the lure-making desk and dialed Hannibal's number.

Hannibal picked up after the first ring, as if he'd been waiting on the other side for Will's call.

"Hannibal."

"Will," his voice was tense.

"Please come over today? I missed you."

"Did you go to the scene?"

"No. I changed my mind. Got nauseous just thinking about it. I guess you're right, I need more time to resume consultations," Will closed his eyes. It wasn't technically a lie, but it wasn't the full truth either.

"Oh. I see," Will felt Hannibal's tension ease, "I need to finish a few errands here, so please expect me in three hours or so. I will bring lunch."

Finish what? Cutting a victim? Sealing the meat?

"Sure. Don't be long."

"I won't, Will. See you soon."

Will went to the bedroom and got the red robe. It was weird that he needed a comforting shield for his talk with Hannibal, but he did.

To concentrate better during the upcoming conversation, he needed to occupy his mind and hands with something time-consuming. He settled behind the lure desk, and got to work.

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Hannibal arrived in three hours. It was definitely his Bentley, Will could now distinguish the noise of the gravel under its tires.

He watched Hannibal climb the steps, and saw the dogs greet him with familiar barks and tail-wags. As he petted them all one by one, Hannibal slipped them treats from his pocket, and they happily ate the delicious pieces of meat. Will stared incredulously at the scene, thinking that his dogs have been fooled as well.

Greeting him at the door, Will gave him a chaste kiss on the cheek. Hannibal took off his coat.

“Hi.”

“Hi,” Hannibal said, a bit of uncertainty visible in his eyes, though he was hiding it well, “I hope you didn’t eat yet, because I brought lunch.”

“Of course not, I was waiting for you.”

“Great. I just need to do some last-minute cooking. Lunch will be ready in fifteen minutes.”

Will shook his head fondly. It usually took him fifteen minutes to prepare meals from scratch, but of course Hannibal’s meals would take hours, and fifteen minutes of extra cooking time was barely nothing to him.

“How are you feeling?”

“Much better, thank you. Had no nightmares tonight. I’ll just finish up this fishing lure I was making, and then I’ll join you, okay?”

“Sure, dear Will.”

It felt so good to hear Hannibal call him that. He knew Hannibal was as honest as he could be, at least he never told outright lies. And Will was dear to Hannibal, that much has always been true.

Hannibal busied himself at the counter, heating up the pan and taking out an already marinated piece of meat.

Another puzzle piece clicked in Will’s mind. Hannibal almost never used packaged meat from a shop. Everything seemed so obvious now, Will had to suppress a wave of admiration at the fact he, apparently one of the best profilers of the FBI, had been so clueless.

As Hannibal cooked, and Will was finishing up the lure, he thought about how cozy it felt to be near each other like that, each engrossed in doing something they loved. He looked over at Hannibal across the room and into the kitchen — eyes focused in concentration, movements of his hands studied, controlled and efficient, muscles flexing under his ironed shirt. That apron of his, practical and a bit ridiculous.

Unable to hold back any longer, Will got up and came over. He took Hannibal’s face in both of his hands, and felt Hannibal lean into him, abandoning his full precision work in an instant. He kissed Hannibal with all the passion he had, and felt Hannibal’s full-body sigh of relief.

Above all, Will wanted to get as close as possible, melt with Hannibal, feel him everywhere, be all over him.

“Will?” Hannibal finally said as they parted, half-annoyed at being disturbed.

“So I didn’t go to the scene,” Will said, slowly and carefully, looking into Hannibal’s eyes. “But Jack sent me some photos.”

Hannibal froze, eyes widening.

“I appreciate your gift to me. The red chrysanthemums were particularly striking.”

In a millisecond, Hannibal tensed in his arms and gripped the knife. Will didn’t even have the time to blink, with extreme force, Hannibal shoved him against the fridge, and took the knife to his throat.

“Easy now, easy,” Will put his hands in the air, a prey entirely at Hannibal’s mercy.

Hannibal’s eyes were wild — shock and fear and violence all blurred together. But his resolve wavered at Will’s calm tone.

“Hannibal, I told no one. And this doesn’t change a thing between us.”

Hannibal was still staring at him in disbelief. Ready to strike at any moment. Even though deep down he knew Hannibal would never hurt him, Will had to choose his words carefully to survive this with the least amount of damage.

“Listen to me. I don’t care that you’re the Ripper, and the copycat, and whoever else. I don’t give a fuck. Please understand.”

“How can you not care?”

“I told you it felt good to kill Hobbs. If I could relive it, I’d do it again in an instant. I’d want to stab him with a knife, see the blood pour. I’d love to display him too, with those antlers he loved so much coming out of his cracked skull.” Hannibal’s grip on Will lessened enough that he could breathe more freely.

Encouraged by Hannibal’s reaction, Will continued.

“I realized I felt a bit disappointed to hear Campbell died, because I wanted to kill him myself, strangle him with a rope. See his eyes pop, so he’d never have to look at another vulnerable girl again. Turns out you got there first.”

“You really thought about it.”

“I did.”

Hannibal still looked unsure. The knife didn’t budge by an inch.

“You know that Campbell is just one in a long list of-”

“I love you for who you are,” Will cut him off, not wanting to hear justifications.

“You love me?”

“I do.”

It was as clear as day, obvious and indisputable, and Will was shocked that he was only saying it now. He should’ve said it ages ago, should’ve said it everyday, until Hannibal believed him.

Hannibal dropped the knife.

“I love you too, Will. More than anything else in the world,” he looked into his eyes with such emotion, Will almost suffocated on it, “If you wish me to stop, I’d never kill again.”

Will shook his head.

“You don’t get it. I don’t want you to stop,” Will said. “I love you not despite who you are, but because of it.”

A sob escaped Hannibal’s throat, and Will kicked the knife away from them, leaning closer into Hannibal, touching the side of his face, his temple, his jaw with care and affection. Taming a wild animal.

“How can you be so sure?”

“Hannibal, you were the one who always said that I had darkness in me.” Will smiled, “Last night I discovered that’s absolutely true. It mirrors your darkness. That’s why we belong together.”

Gripping his shirt with both hands, he leaned in and kissed Hannibal with all the passion he had, hoping he could understand.

They stayed in a tight embrace, and after quite some time Hannibal eased completely, slowly letting the tension and fear and worry go.

Unwilling to part for even a moment, Will thought that he never felt like this before. Absolutely free and vulnerable, yet safe and happy. Knowing, with absolute clarity, what he wanted from his life, as if a sudden serenity came over and calmed the chaos of his stormy existence. And knowing he has it all in his arms.

They kissed some more, Will resolute and gentle, Hannibal with a note of desperation and greed. Until suddenly Will’s stomach rumbled. They parted with breathless laughs.

“Sorry, but I am starving,” Will rubbed at the nape of his neck. “After all, I was promised lunch.”

They looked at the counter, where the meat was ready to be cooked. Most certainly it belonged to Barry Campbell.

“The source of it… Doesn’t bother you?” Hannibal asked, looking wary.

“Maybe you could stop feeding the dogs. They will crave people meat next. Not sure we’d always be able to provide it.”

Hannibal had enough shame to look chastised.

“What about feeding you?”

“I thought about it. But then I realized that I was eating that food and enjoying it for almost a year. Not giving a fuck where it came from. Everything you prepare is delicious. I really don’t care what or who it is. Your food is to die for. Literally,” Will made an effort not to laugh.

“You’re laughing at something that is not a joke.”

“Hannibal, I’m telling you the truth. I am also a bit shocked that I do not care. But the moment I found out, it felt like all the puzzle pieces clicked together. I didn’t feel fear or disgust. What I felt was relief and recognition.”

Will took Hannibal’s hand, kissed the back of it.

“I want to be with you for the rest of my life. Eventually, I want to kill with you. I want to see you in your element. My fantasy regarding you was to see you completely unhinged, and I think you look as beautiful in a murderous spree, as you do when we have sex. I want to experience it with you. Being godlike, taking an undeserving life. Killing, and then consuming.”

There were tears in Hannibal’s eyes, and Will hugged him close again, clutching at him. They stayed silent, marveling in each other’s hug, and the huge revelation that they were going to be okay after all.

“I never knew if I saw you, or saw the image of you I desperately wanted to see. You have no idea how lucky I feel right now. This is more than I ever dared to hope for,” Hannibal confessed, voice low.

“I feel the same,” Will said sincerely, and his stomach growled again. “Come on, let’s eat that Campbell fellow, so we can go to bed faster.”

“Will,” Hannibal groaned, mortified. But he was smiling.

“What? I want to make love to the love of my life,” Will said, brushing a hair from Hannibal’s forehead. He earned another kiss for that confession.

* * *

Campbell tasted supreme.

“Oh my god, you outdid yourself,” Will couldn’t help but shove another piece of meat in his mouth. The texture of it, the sauce that went along with it. He felt like licking the plate clean.

He wondered if Hannibal would draw the line at that.

“I’m glad you enjoy him dead. He has more use in death than in life.”

Will chuckled. He watched Hannibal drink from his glass of red wine. Of course, Hannibal had to bring his own fancy wine glasses, because Will only had beer and whiskey glasses. Also he was drinking alone, because Will was still on medication and wasn’t allowed alcohol. It was great that he felt comfortable enough to bring the wine and glasses over with him, because even the way Hannibal drank now seemed to be immensely sexy, and Will was enjoying the show far more than he would’ve enjoyed the wine.

But questions were still swirling in his mind.

“Why’d you have to be so obvious with him? I knew it was you, instantly.”

Hannibal put his knife and fork down.

“Subconsciously, I think, I really wanted you to know me. Even though it scared me so much. Like I said the other night, you make me lose control. I suppose I really didn’t think Jack would so blatantly break our agreement and seek your consultations so fast, after he swore to me he’d leave you alone. Most importantly, though, I was just filled with rage at that man for what he did to you. I couldn’t let him walk the earth again.”

“It was a beautiful display.”

It truly was. Probably Will’s favorite. Not that he had ranked the Ripper’s displays from his most favorite to least favorite, but… When he thought of it, just the image sent ripples of awe in his mind, like a prized piece of artwork would.

“What did you say to Jack?”

“Oh, I made up some bullshit about it being religious. Thankfully, you did leave him on the church grounds.”

“It was just close to his hiding place,” Hannibal shrugged, and Will had to laugh at the nonchalance.

“You are brilliant, you know that?” Will said, fondness barely hidden in his eyes, “No one could catch you for years. You did it all right under the FBI’s nose. How long… How long ago did you kill your first victim?”

“I was 19. I avenged my family’s murders.”

“And you never stopped since?”

“There were pauses that lasted several years when I didn’t kill anyone. But I always returned to it,” Hannibal had another sip of his wine. “It’s in my nature, and making art and cooking food is something I enjoy doing.”

“And you said you’d stop for me. Something you did since you were 19?”

“I’d do anything for you, Will, you know that.”

Their plates were empty, and they enjoyed the silence for a bit. Along with the food, Will savored Hannibal’s confession, marveling in the huge meaning that it held. Hannibal would’ve really stopped for him. Stopped doing something that was in his nature, like a wild animal who’d stop eating meat, and suffer for it. No one in the world could ever say anything as romantic. Will’s heart beat faster as he looked into Hannibal’s eyes, feeling the heat inside of him rise.

“Anything?”

“Anything.”

“In that case… There’s one thing I want tonight.”

“What is it?”

Will leaned closer, putting a hand on the back of Hannibal’s neck. His gray-blue eyes looked right into Hannibal’s dark soul.

“Take me. Without restraints. Let it be as rough as you want it to,” he whispered against Hannibal’s lips, making Hannibal moan under his breath.

“Will. It will be your first time. I don’t want to hurt you.”

“We have all the time in the world for being slow. I need you now. I need to know you, as you are. To see you fully, and also for you to see me.”

The ease with which Hannibal lifted Will from the chair and carried him to the living room was another obvious sign. No therapist who sat at their desk all day could have the physical strength to do that. It was satisfying to see even more facets of his lover revealed, no secrets left between them at all.

Will was about to get fucked by a serial killer and a cannibal, but also the love of his life, and it made something in his soul set aflame with desire.

“Do you have any idea what you do to me?” Hannibal growled like a wild animal, throwing Will on the bed. He was finally showing himself. His dangerous side, the side that killed and maimed and devoured. All laid bare for Will. It scared and excited him at the same time. Most people saw Hannibal like this before dying. Will was about to die too, but with another kind of death.

“The same thing you do to me,” Will said, tugging Hannibal down to kiss him wildly, all teeth and tongue, needing him closer.

Hannibal shoved off the robe, and almost ripped Will’s shirt off him. He latched onto his neck, kissing and sucking roughly, making Will cry out in pain and pleasure. His arms were keeping Will in place.

Will was already half-hard and dizzy on arousal. He thrust up against Hannibal, rubbing his obvious bulge against his hip, urging him to go faster.

Hannibal wasted no time then. He undressed Will in record speed, and took off his clothes too, all the while kissing every inch of Will's uncovered flesh. He laid kisses on his stomach and abdomen, and the sharp V of his hipbone.

"Turn around," he commanded, and Will rolled around willingly, pulsating with arousal. He was ready for Hannibal's fingers, but instead Hannibal kissed down his back and spine, until his hands grabbed at the globes of Will's ass, spreading them.

The next second, Will felt Hannibal's tongue pressing into him.

"Ah, Han-" Will choked on it, because Hannibal dived in like a starving man at a feast. He licked and sucked and kissed at Will's tight hole and all around it, getting it wet and slick and hot. Will never thought he might enjoy this as much as he did. He melted under Hannibal's heated tongue, cock twitching at every lap, shoving himself impossibly further into Hannibal, demanding *more*. Hannibal was relentless, going at him without even stopping to breathe, fast and harsh. Will felt a tell-tale pleasure pool low in his spine, and made an effort to still himself.

"Please, just," it took every ounce of willpower for Will to roll around and tug Hannibal off of him, "I want it to last when you're inside me. I won't if you keep teasing me."

"I was enjoying you, like I wanted to for ages," Hannibal said, wiping his mouth from all the excessive spit, fire burning in his eyes. Will loved him like this — feral and grandiose, a work of art.

"Enjoy me. With this," Will said, gripping lightly at Hannibal's cock, hard and heavy between his thighs.

Hannibal smiled. First, he took a pillow and shoved it under Will's ass. Then, grabbing the lube from the nightstand, Hannibal coated his fingers generously. He manhandled Will's legs to go on top of his shoulders, and then pressed a cold finger to his overheated rim.

And even though Will asked for rough, he went slow, easing himself into the slick hotness one finger at a time, massaging and stretching. It was maddening.

"Come on, Hannibal, I won't break," Will whined, shoving himself down on a finger. It wasn't enough at all.

"I know you won't. But I want to make it as good as it can be for you," Hannibal said, crooking his finger just right to caress Will's prostate.

"God, more, please," Will breathed out, loving the sensation of it against that bundle of pleasure, but craving something bigger and harder. "I'm ready, please. I need you."

"Not yet," Hannibal slipped three fingers in, fucking in and out of Will slowly, stretching the rim all the while Will writhed desperately under him, unable to do anything but grip at his

shoulders, and dig his nails into the soft flesh of Hannibal's back.

"Hannibal, I swear to god," Will was going mad, and he was babbling, "Come on, fuck me now."

"You greedy, rude boy," Hannibal groaned, but finally got his fingers out and coated his cock with more lube instead, "You ought to be punished for your dirty mouth."

He pressed at the rim, and Will felt how huge his cock was against Will's stretched hole. His mouth watered in anticipation.

They both moaned as Hannibal finally entered him. At first, Will felt a bit of pain at the stretch, but as Hannibal eased in, it quickly equaled in pleasure. He felt stuffed full, finally satisfied to have Hannibal inside and all around him, covering him and pressing into him with desperation.

"God, you feel exquisite," Hannibal's eyes rolled back in his head, as he pushed even further, all the way in, balls slapping against Will's ass.

"You too," Will breathed out, shoving down on Hannibal's cock, urging him to move, "Please, wanna feel it."

And then, at last, Hannibal obliged. He leaned forward, stretching Will's legs even more, and started fucking into him with fast, harsh thrusts, drilling at Will's prostate at a perfect angle, making his toes curl and cock leak where it was trapped between their bellies.

"Christ, yes, yes, just like that," Will was scratching everywhere he could reach, pulling at Hannibal's hair, gripping his strong, flexing arms, and absolutely loving being used by him in this way.

On top of him, Hannibal was all sweaty and flushed right down his chest, grunting and groaning and working his hips as best as he could, lost in the sensation.

"I love you, I love you so much," Will was babbling through it all, feeling his whole body aflame, every nerve on fire.

"*Aš tave myliu*," Hannibal whispered, and Will had no idea what it meant, but his eyes said it all.

The bed was creaking with the intensity of their fucking, and the only other noises were their fast breaths and the lewd slapping of bodies mixed together.

"So fucking good, you feel so good," Will groaned. He didn't even touch himself once, yet he was painfully hard, and ready to come at any second. It's been ages since he came untouched, but right now he was absolutely on the verge.

Suddenly, Hannibal lifted Will's ass, fucking into him with a new force, at a new angle that made Will scream. He was hitting his pleasure center at every forceful thrust, and Will couldn't take any more of this bliss. He saw stars as he came with a shout of Hannibal's name, jerking himself fast and rough through it all, making an absolute mess between them.

He clamped down on Hannibal's cock deep inside of him, and that made Hannibal come too, stuffing Will full of his hot come, gripping at his hips so hard he almost drew blood.

The look of infinite love and feral passion that Hannibal gave him in that moment was the most cherished gift he ever gave Will. Breathing roughly, Hannibal sprawled on top of Will, head on Will's chest, falling up and down with Will's fast breathing.

"Fuck, you feel so good inside me," Will breathed out, half-coherent, "Stay, please."

"My gorgeous boy," Hannibal said, leaving little kisses on top of every inch of skin he could reach without moving.

They stayed embraced that until Hannibal eventually softened, and pulled out as carefully as he could, but Will still winced at the sensation and the stretch.

"Ah, shit. I'll definitely feel it for days."

"I'm s-"

"Don't you dare say that," Will cut Hannibal off, "I wanted it. I couldn't be more happy."

"Thank god. I was really afraid you wouldn't."

"Why?"

"What we just did was so out of the realm of what I thought was possible. I'm, well… Bigger than average. And not everyone enjoys bottoming," Hannibal sighed, "Not to be rude, but I always assumed you were straight, Will."

"Now I think I never was," Will said, with a laugh. It wasn't true, but Hannibal did eclipse every other experience he previously had. He wondered if the same was true to Hannibal. "Did you enjoy it?"

"More than anything. I also feel… insatiable when it comes to you. I want you to lay you out and feast on you for hours, and to have you slow and gentle on a rug near a fireplace, and I want you to take me fast and rough in my office, and against the counter where I cook, and I want it in my car when we go stargazing. And… Forgive me, Will. I…" Hannibal honest to god blushed, catching himself oversharing.

"You've really thought about it," Will echoed a phrase Hannibal said to him a few hours ago. His body flushed with a new wave of arousal, even though he didn't think it was possible. Flustered Hannibal was another facet of him that Will was now allowed to witness. It was going to his head like fine champagne.

"I did. There are not enough stars in the sky for all the things I want to do with you," Hannibal said, reaching up to kiss Will slowly.

"I am really looking forward to it," Will sighed, utterly blissed out.

* * *

The next morning, Will got up early. He felt extremely thirsty, but still spent a good ten minutes looking at Hannibal, asleep next to him, peaceful and gorgeous. His hair was unkempt, and he looked younger and more vulnerable. Now Will could wake up to this every day, and he felt blessed.

Eventually he got up and put on his robe, then went to the kitchen to get a glass of water. Immediately something caught his eye outside — a strange car parked in his alleyway. Going out the front door, he immediately spotted a woman standing on his porch. Flaming curls, red lipstick, and a camera hanging on her neck.

“What are you doing on my property?” Will said, squeezing his robe tightly around himself.

“Good morning to you too, Mr Graham,” Freddie Lounds gave him her trademark smile, devious and sugary.

“Do you know you’re technically trespassing? Cause I haven’t invited you in.”

“I was just wondering if you could give me more details regarding Barry Campbell’s death. Since you’re intimately involved in the case.”

“I know nothing. I’ve been at home, recovering from a gunshot wound, as you’re well aware.”

“Miss Lounds,” Hannibal came out of the house too, pajama pants and long-sleeved shirt on, “What an unexpected pleasure.”

His hand sneaked around Will’s waist, removing all doubts about the exact place where he spent the night.

Freddie’s eyes flashed with interest. Her fingers gripped the camera. But before she could do anything, Will’s cheeks colored bright red, this time with rage.

“Don’t you dare. And get the fuck away from my property, before I get my gun,” Will said, and he knew it was immensely rude. He didn’t care, because partly it was the fear for Hannibal speaking inside of him. He didn’t want Freddie to snoop around, and find out something she shouldn’t. If she somehow managed to discover he was the Ripper, Will would have to kill her with his bare hands. Not that the idea wasn’t appealing.

She clicked her tongue regretfully, finger still on the shutter button. If she managed to take a photo…

“You have quite a fanbase at Tattlecrime now, you know. I could make you even more famous. *Wounded FBI profiler shares details of murdered serial killer’s…*”

“Whatever. Go away. Now.”

“Sure, sure. But promise to give me a call if you remember something interesting.”

They watched her get in the car, and Will’s tension lessened a bit.

Hannibal stroked the side of his arm soothingly, and as the car disappeared, Will let himself be pulled back into the house.

“I can’t believe I’m in love with the rudest man in the world,” Hannibal said to him then, a bit awestruck.

“You love me,” Will grinned. He would never get tired of hearing it.

“Yes. And you were quite the protector there. Barking at Miss Lounds like a dog defending property.”

“She was trespassing. And I’m possessive of what’s mine.” Will said, “I will be such an intolerable, jealous bitch around you. Hope you’re ready for that.”

“Who says I won’t be the same?” Hannibal teased, pulling Will closer.

They kissed and kissed in the kitchen, as Josie and Apollo started jumping on them, whining.

“Guess who else is jealous,” Will chuckled, then reluctantly pulled away from the embrace to feed the dogs.

Hannibal prepared breakfast. This time it was avocado toast with eggs Benedict, cooked to crispy perfection. Will got busy with their coffee, and spent the rest of the time watching Hannibal in his element. He thought he would never get tired of seeing Hannibal doing something he loved.

As they ate, sunlight streamed into the kitchen, and Will couldn’t help but smile like an idiot, sneaking glances at Hannibal the entire time.

“I feel so happy,” Will said, dreamily, “There is just one more thing I need to do to cement this feeling.”

Hannibal eyed Will curiously, as he took his phone out.

Will dialed Jack’s number, and Jack responded after two beeps.

“I won’t be coming back,” Will said, without even a greeting, absolutely resolute.

“What?”

“It’s bad for my mental health. Just looking at those photos triggered me again, and I decided to step away from consulting. And I’m going to take a break from teaching too. For a few months.”

Will’s tone implied that all of this was non-negotiable. There was a heavy silence on the other end of the line.

“Did Dr Lecter make you do this?”

Hannibal watched him, and Will rolled his eyes.

“Not that this is in any way relevant, but no. This is entirely my decision.”

“I’m very disappointed to hear that. I hope you’ll reconsider,” Jack said, “We’re so close to cracking the case…”

“Are we? It’s been a year. Dozens of murders. I don’t think we’re ever gonna catch him,” Will said, trying to suppress a snort, as he watched the Ripper himself take out blueberry tarts from the fridge for them to enjoy with their coffee.

“Will, listen. Beverly found new evidence. A strand of hair, that’s not black like Campbell’s. It’s fine and ash brown. We’re sending it for DNA testing right now. I know it’s far-fetched, but…”

Will paused, eyes widening. He clutched an arm to his chest.

“Got it. Well, wish you luck. My decision remains unchanged. Take care, Jack,” Will said, and hung up.

He took a gulp of his coffee, and then glanced at Hannibal. They looked at each other, dread in both their eyes.

Will’s anxiety gripped at his throat. So much for feeling happy. A single strand of hair could end them both. His eyes landed on the flowers that were starting to wilt. They were as red as Freddie’s lipstick, who also was just here, looking for god knows what. Suddenly he recalled a recent conversation with Beverly, also about these flowers. Too many loose threads.

“Hannibal. There’s something we need to discuss.”

“Yes?”

“Chances are slim, but even if that hair isn’t yours… You were careless this time. I almost got you outed. I asked Beverly about the meaning of these flowers, and she assumed I was talking about the case file. Alana saw the flowers. Freddie might’ve even taken a sneaky photo before I got to her. Anyone could put two and two together.”

“Chrysanthemums are not uncommon, Will.” Hannibal said pensively.

“I don’t want to lose you over some goddamn flowers. No matter how beautiful they are.”

“You’re right, of course. I was careless,” Hannibal sighed, “Usually I don’t kill on such short notice, or overcome by such strong emotions.”

“If the hair is yours, we have just 24 hours before the test results come back.”

Twenty-four hours before Hannibal could get arrested and eradicated forever from Will’s life. His stomach felt like lead.

“I think we need to leave,” Will said, before his brain even caught up with the magnitude of such a decision.

They stared at each other.

“What are you saying?”

“Nothing is tying me to this place. Even if they don’t catch you, I won’t be able to go back to consulting and double bluff with Jack after you kill again. And I don’t really care about teaching. It was just something I did for money. Will have to find something else. I could fix motors, or… Whatever.”

Hannibal stayed silent for a few minutes, lost in deep thought.

“To tell you the truth, I feel the same,” he said in contemplation, “My previous life feels vapid. These last few days I’ve spent with you showed me how happy I can be without pretentious dinners and trying to impress people I don’t care about at all. Leaving doesn’t even feel like a hardship right now.”

“The problem is, we don’t have much time. We need to leave today,” Will said, heart beating faster. There was so much to do now. Where would they go? How will they survive on the lam?

“You don’t have to go with me, they’ve got nothing on you,” Hannibal said, covering Will’s hand with his own.

“You’re an idiot if you think I won’t go with you.”

“I feel bad. Because I was careless, now you have to turn your whole life upside down on such a short notice. You really love living in this house.”

Will shook his head.

“Not really. I don’t care about the material side of the house. You can see the state of it. I never took care of this space, to be honest. But I do love my dogs, and I love fishing by the stream. I hope we can find a place just as isolated, where both of us can be comfortable. If we start driving north-”

“Will, I have hideouts all around the world. Our false documents are already prepared.”

Hannibal said it so casually, sipping his coffee, and Will stared at him in shock.

“Our? You got me a passport?”

“I was hopeful.”

“When? How did you even do it?”

“Remember I told you about Chiyoh? My aunt’s warden. She has been running errands like that for me my entire life. There’s no one I trust more.”

Will’s mind was rushing with questions and possibilities.

“What do I have to pack?”

“Anything of sentimental value. Don’t bother with clothes, supplies, or anything else. I have everything else we might need in our house in Norway.”

“Our house?”

“I already included you in my will. In case of my death, you get half of my possessions.” Hannibal looked bashful, “I bought it and furnished it with you in mind. I hope you’ll like it. Can’t wait for you to see it.”

“You’re crazy,” Will said, hiding his face in his hands. It was a bit too much to process. Just a few days ago he was losing his mind over Hannibal buying him some flowers, and now it turns out he bought them and furnished an entire house on the other end of the world, just because he was somewhat hopeful. “I didn’t realize that you *really* have money.”

“I told you, Will. My family comes from old European aristocracy. I am a Count, after all.”

Will felt dizzy. He really wished his father had been alive, just to see the look on his face when he’d discover it. Will was planning to live on the lam with his lover — a murderous, cannibalistic, extremely rich, and male count, ten years his senior. His father would probably die a second time at the mere thought.

Winston came over and plopped on the floor right at Will’s feet.

“What about the dogs? Will I have to…” Will’s muscles tightened all over, as he looked into Winston’s trusting, big eyes.

He looked over at Charlie and Apollo, asleep on top of each other. Thought about Josie and Freya, who were probably outside. Max, who was old now, and needed extra care. Will he have to give up all of them? Some of them? How could he ever choose between who to take and who to leave behind?

“It’s okay,” Hannibal said, like going on the lam with dogs wasn’t the most stupid idea in the world. He covered Will’s hand with his own, and calmed him down instantly. “We’ll figure it out. It’s probably just a question of hiring a bigger private jet. As far as I know, dogs are allowed on board. Even if that’s not the case, we’re not leaving them behind. Chiyoh will come take them and get them to us. Nothing is impossible.”

Will exhaled in relief.

“God, thank you. You’re incredible.”

Hannibal smiled. Will loved to see him do it so often now, and promised himself he’d do anything to make Hannibal smile like that even more in the future.

But his heart was still pounding. It felt scary and exciting that this insane idea that appeared just ten minutes ago was taking shape and becoming reality right before his eyes. They still needed to think everything through, to make sure they were safe in their new life.

“Is there evidence at your house?”

“I’m always careful and prepared for any outcome. All the evidence is in the hidden basement. If the DNA result isn’t me, they won’t go looking for me, or my basement at all. But if it’s positive, I’m a dead man either way. In any case, there’s no time to clean up and get rid of it all.”

It was true. There must have been too many things that Hannibal used to kill and prepare his victims. There were too many things at his house in general. Was he going to leave it all behind?

“What about the things you need at your house? And the office? Aren’t there like a million books? Your papers?”

“I’ll have to get my artworks and a few selected books. I have digital copies of other books and all my documents. Everything else can be restored. Will, I’ve been prepared for a situation such as this one for years. Don’t worry about material things.”

“Fine. But what about the people then? Your practice?”

“My practice was just a wall to hide behind. Something to keep up my reputation. Sure, I enjoy psychology, but it’s just one of my many interests. I’ll have to refer my patients to my colleagues. It’s a matter of a few emails.” Hannibal shrugged. “What about the people in your life?”

“What people? I won’t miss Alana,” Will snorted, “Besides her, only Bev was my friend, I guess. But she will never understand. It’s a sacrifice I’m willing to make, for both of us.”

Hannibal nodded.

Everything seemed too good to be true. Will’s heart was racing.

“I’ll start packing now, so we can leave sooner. We’ll go to your house and get everything you might need. And we leave tonight.”

“You’ve decided. We’re really doing this,” Hannibal breathed out, looking at Will as if he single-handedly created the entire universe. Maybe he did, in a way. It certainly felt like Hannibal created one for Will.

“We are. And we’re going to be fine.”

The rest of the morning was spent gathering things, and most of it was dog stuff. Besides that, Will got some clothes, including the red robe he was now unwilling to part with, his laptop, important documents and cash. A few books he particularly liked. His guns. The fishing lures he cared about most.

Hannibal helped him pack it all in just two bags, one exclusively with dog items.

As they were prepared to leave, he took one last glance at his Wolf Trap home. He expected regret or nostalgia, but there was none. Today he would leave this place of constant night

terrors and never come back. Once again, there was only relief.

“Are you really gonna leave the flowers here?” Hannibal asked, with a half-smile.

Will’s eyes landed on the bouquet. He took a few steps over to the table and touched the soft petals.

Then he turned to Hannibal and nodded.

“I don’t care, Hannibal. I love you, and I want the whole world to know,” Will said, and kissed Hannibal softly on the cheek.

“I love you too, my dear Will,” Hannibal whispered, as they closed the door behind them.

The future was bright.

Chapter End Notes

There is dessert in the form of a final chapter-epilogue coming really soon, so stay tuned!
Our boys deserve their happy ending (do they really, being killers and cannibals? I don't care, yes, they do.)

Dolce

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Walking through the woods back to their home, all six dogs at their feet, Will thought about how small his world had been before they came to Norway. Previously, his love for nature was nurtured by the stream in Wolf Trap and by what little he saw of the woods of Virginia. Now he could fish in some of the most beautiful lakes in the world, or even venture on a fishing boat in the vast North Sea whenever he wanted. He got to experience the incredible sights of the Fjords and the snow capped mountains almost every day. Together with their dogs, he and Hannibal hiked for hours, exploring the peaceful woods around their home, and sometimes took the car to go into the wilderness, as Will basked in the glory of the epic landscapes all around them.

Just as his love for nature was now amplified beyond his wildest expectations, his love for Hannibal was, too. Before Hannibal, Will thought he knew love, but it was nothing compared to the consuming, ever-present, hungry and desperate feeling that Hannibal evoked in him.

Their home turned out to be perfect. Upon arrival, he was shocked to find rooms furnished with everything they might need, as if they lived in this house for years. His wardrobe was full of clothes that fit him perfectly (sometimes even too perfectly, showing off his muscles in obvious ways. Will didn't protest, what with the appreciative gazes Hannibal gave him). The fridge and pantry were already stocked with food that could help them survive a whole winter. The room downstairs was full of Hannibal's beloved books, a comfortable desk for doing office work, and simple workout gear that they both used to keep in shape. The dogs instantly took a liking to that room, as it was the warmest.

Upstairs they had separate rooms, because, as Hannibal explained on the first night of their arrival, he wouldn't dare *assume*. The very same day, what was supposed to be Will's bedroom transformed into what could be described as "the room with Will's wardrobe and a spare bed and some random items". Will rarely spent time there. From the very first one, the nights were all spent in what was supposed to be Hannibal's room — but really, their bedroom.

However, most of the time during the day, they lounged together on the sofas of the spacious first floor that had a cozy living room and a joined modern kitchen. The walls and floors were wooden, there were big glass windows that faced the forest, and a spacious veranda that Will was really looking forward to use during the warmer months.

Of course, there was also a secret basement, with an entrance hidden masterfully from prying eyes. The basement was used twice after they arrived here. Once for a rude priest from a neighboring town who kept invading their privacy. Once for an equally impolite fisherman they met at sea who had a problem with them holding hands. They both tasted delicious, and Will found that he enjoyed everything about it — from his first violent stabs to the way warm water washed the blood off his hands.

Outside, there was a separate entrance to a garage, where Hannibal kept a motorcycle that he went into town with — always a sight to behold. Usually, whenever they traveled together they took the car, but Will was determined to buy a helmet someday and go on the motorcycle with Hannibal, holding him tight around the waist, pressing into his back and hugging onto him even more closely than necessary. Just thinking about it was filling him with fluttery feelings, and Will was looking forward to that day. Truthfully, now he looked forward to every day, and that in itself was a miracle. It took Will 38 years to start enjoying life, and he didn't plan to waste a single hour on unenjoyable pastimes.

The sun was setting, and it painted the sky with reds and yellows, that contrasted well with the snowy landscape. He took Hannibal's hand as they stepped out of the woods into the clearing, and saw their house on the other end of it. Even though there was a gravel road leading up to it, it still felt like it was in the middle of nowhere, detached, just a small universe that belonged to them only.

When they stepped inside, the dogs immediately tumbled into the small office room, and then sprawled there on their beds, cuddling up to each other. They were likely tired from their walk. Will and Hannibal were also a bit tired, so as they took off their coats, Will offered to make some tea. They were both rosy-cheeked from their walk, and Will was looking forward to their quiet and warm evening in.

As Will got busy making tea, Hannibal lit up the fireplace. The light of the fire illuminated the room, and Will dimmed the lamp, making it even more cozy. Hannibal sat on the couch, taking out his ipad. Every day he took time to closely monitor the news.

"Anything new?" Will asked after a while, settling beside Hannibal on the couch, placing a tray with much-needed hot tea and homemade chocolate chip cookies on the small coffee table.

"Miss Lounds just can't let us go. There's another in her series about us."

"Should've strangled her right there on the porch," Will muttered.

"Maybe someday," Hannibal said, giving Will a meaningful look.

Will smiled.

"So, what's she saying?"

"Apparently someone spotted us off the coast of Cuba." Hannibal said. "Close by there's been a murder with a robbery," he rolled his eyes. "As if we'd be so tacky."

"She's just trying to make more money. She got thousands on the crest of our escape, and she's still trying to use us to sell more sensations."

"There's something new, though," Hannibal said, and Will detected a bit of anxiety in his voice. After taking a sip of his tea, he continued, "Now she's calling us *Murder Husbands*."

"Oh," Will's stomach flipped.

Hannibal studied his expression closely, with apparent fondness. Will fidgeted in his seat a bit, suddenly unable to meet Hannibal's burning gaze. He grabbed his cup of tea for a distraction. Took a sip. Put it down. Got it again.

Finally, Will said, voice barely audible, "Uhm. I like the sound of that."

"Do you now?"

Will put away his cup of tea once again, and took a deep breath.

He reached out to hold Hannibal's hand in his own, tracing patterns on the soft skin. Finally, he said: "Don't make me spell it out."

"Now you're just making me more curious," Hannibal leaned in, nuzzling against his temple, breathing in his scent.

"You… know how possessive I get about you," Will said, caressing Hannibal's bare ring finger, "It would be nice to have a reminder and a warning, right here. For everyone to see."

"A reminder and a warning?" Hannibal's eyes crinkled in amusement.

"A warning to back off. And a reminder that I am yours, and that you are mine." Will murmured, "It'd be really nice, actually."

Hannibal smiled warmly, pleased by Will's words.

Then he suddenly said: "If you'll excuse me…"

He got up off the couch, as Will watched him curiously. Anxiety was filling him up to the brim with every step Hannibal took to the small entryway. Will watched him sneak a hand in his coat pocket — the same coat he was just wearing on their walk, that still had snow on the hood.

Then he took a small box out, and Will's heart stopped.

Hannibal sat back on the couch, right next to Will. He was holding the little box steadily, but his knuckles were white with the force of his grip.

He took a deep breath.

"Will, you know how deeply and ardently I love you. These past few months… Living with you in this cabin. Killing with you. Sharing myself so deeply, and only finding love and acceptance in return, has been the happiest I've ever felt in my whole life. With this ring, I'd like to make you a promise that until my last breath I will do everything in my power to make you happy. And that I am yours, for as long as you'll have me."

When he got on one knee, Will was already barely breathing.

"Will Graham. Will you do me the greatest honor of marrying me?"

“God, Hannibal,” with the back of his hand, Will took a moment to wipe the tears from his eyes, a mix of his own and those that mirrored Hannibal’s deep feelings. He was so overwhelmed, he forgot Hannibal expected an answer from him, like it wasn’t the most obvious thing in the world.

“Yes. Of course, yes!” he said, falling to his knees too, and squeezing Hannibal in the tightest of embraces, feeling Hannibal sigh in relief and embrace him too. They hugged for what seemed like an eternity, while Will tried to calm down enough not to start full on sobbing.

Slowly, Hannibal managed to break off the hug enough to take out the rings. Both were a tasteful and simple platinum band, something that Will himself could’ve chosen.

“You really had that on our walk? How long did you have them?”

“I got them custom-made as soon as we arrived. Carried them with me on all our walks,” Hannibal admitted, the tips of his ears flaming-red. “I wanted to propose to you on that cliff where we often watch the sunset. But I was afraid. Never knew if you would want this kind of thing.”

“I never wanted it until you. Never even considered it possible.”

With trembling hands, Hannibal gently took Will’s finger and slipped the ring on. It fit perfectly. Of course, Hannibal would know his ring size. Will took the other ring, and carefully put in on Hannibal’s finger, securing it in place. His heart was hammering in his chest. He didn’t know how such a small piece of metal could make him so incredibly happy.

Studying his ring closely, Will noticed it had an inscription that was only visible when he tilted it.

L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle

“Dante?” Will guessed.

“The last verse of Divine Comedy’s Paradise. *The love that moves the sun and the other stars*. After Dante went on his journey through Hell and Purgatory, he then finally arrives into Heaven with his beloved Beatrice.”

“You big sap,” Will shook his head, but flushed in pleasure. It really did feel like their love could move the sun and the stars. He felt powerful and drunk on Hannibal’s love, and knew that Hannibal could feel his love just as ardently. The inscription was perfect.

“I feel the same. Living with you really feels like heaven after the hell of my life.”

Hannibal leaned in and hugged him close again.

“I’ll do everything in my power to make your life heavenly.”

“And I, yours,” Will murmured, kissing Hannibal softly.

“Will, you already do,” Hannibal sighed, content, as Will kissed him on the lips and peppered even more kisses on his cheeks.

“Let’s go upstairs? Need to make love to my *fiancé*,” Will said, but he was kissing Hannibal non-stop, on his mouth now, not even trying to let him go or stand up from the floor.

At that, Hannibal scooped him in a half embrace and carried him a few feet to the big fluffy rug in front of the fireplace.

“You’re absolutely right, let’s stay. Having you right here is just as good,” Will said with a laugh.

“My love. I can’t wait.”

“Just lie down, please,” Will said, pressing Hannibal to lie on his back, and progressing to open-mouth kisses to Hannibal’s throat, “I want to take care of you tonight, slow and steady.”

For the first month after their escape, their love-making had been frantic and fueled by adrenaline. Will subconsciously feared they were being followed. He was desperate to have Hannibal in any way he could, before they were discovered and separated for good. He read the news non-stop, and the coverage had been insane. That’s why he needed Hannibal carnally, all the time, multiple times a day, in all the corners of their new house. After the first month passed, Will figured that they were somewhat safe. Of course, life was unpredictable, but at least they weren’t being immediately followed. It was then that Hannibal patiently showed Will the joys of more calm and mindful love-making. He did like it both ways. He loved it in any way, as long as it was with Hannibal.

Right now, Hannibal looked absolutely delectable. He was lying on his back on the fluffy rug, his skin was softly illuminated by the fireplace, and his eyes had little flares in them that Will was absolutely entranced by.

“Want to be inside you,” Will murmured, against his lips, then punctuated his wish by kissing Hannibal slow and deep, “Okay?”

“Please, Will,” Hannibal said brokenly, like a prayer. Hannibal seemed to enjoy it in any way, too. Each time, he looked worshipful, like Will was his holy place of prayer.

Will pressed kisses to his cheekbones, then one on each eye-lid, and the bridge of his nose. He marveled in the softness of his skin, and the sighs Hannibal let out. Then he kissed down the column of his neck, savoring it again. His hands took time to unbutton Hannibal’s shirt, and then caress the expanse of his chest. Hannibal resumed his rigorous workout routine as soon as they arrived, so his muscles were toned and tight, he had the body of a hunter.

Will loved to touch his chest, play with the hair there, and then feel the abs on his stomach, stroke his sides and his belly. Leaning down, he languidly kissed each of Hannibal’s nipples until they turned into little aroused pebbles in his mouth. His hands reached the waistband of Hannibal’s pants, and he stroked the sensitive skin of his belly, appreciating the noises Hannibal was making. Carefully, with the back of his hand, he barely pressed on the prominent bulge, teasing Hannibal a bit.

“Will,” Hannibal used his one-syllable name for everything, from begging, to praying, to reprimanding, to worshiping. It might have been the most frequent word he said.

The only noise was the crackling in the fireplace, and then — Will pulling down Hannibal’s zipper, slow enough that it could be considered torture. Hannibal was tensing his muscles with effort, trying not to react and push himself into Will in order to feel some relief.

“You’re gorgeous,” Will said, touching the aroused flesh through the soft cotton fabric, loving the damp spot that already leaked at the head.

At a glacial pace, Will took out the impressive length from his underwear, and gave it a nice, purposeful tug, feeling it fill and harden in his hand.

Hannibal hissed a bit, gripping Will’s hips with a bit more force, and Will realized that the metal of his ring was cold against the overheated flesh. So he started jerking Hannibal with slow, purposeful movements, making sure he felt the ring with each pull, dragging it against his cock, and catching it under the head, pressing it on the slit.

“How does it feel?”

“Like you’re mine,” Hannibal said, eyes closed in pleasure, “Don’t stop.”

Hannibal looked so divine, that Will needed to experience that same kind of bliss, too. He caught sight of the ring on Hannibal’s finger, twinkling in the dark, and craved to feel its coolness against himself.

Not stopping his rhythmic movement, Will took Hannibal’s hand and guided it towards his cock, still trapped uncomfortably in his jeans, pressing it against himself, “Want to feel like you’re mine, too.”

Hannibal didn’t need to be told twice. He immediately unzipped Will’s jeans and took him out in the open, eager to get to where Will was already throbbing for him.

Just as he imagined, Hannibal’s soft and warm hand paired with the cool metal of the ring against his overheated flesh was incredible.

“Hannibal,” Will moaned, closing his eyes. They stroked each other at the same pace, until both were pulsing hard and full, and their breaths were fast and ragged. When Hannibal started leaking heavily, Will made an enormous effort to slow down. He had other plans in mind.

“Turn around for me? Please,” Will said, and got up on his knees to get rid of the rest of his clothes, and then help Hannibal out of his too, and let him settle comfortably on his belly. He took a pillow to put under Hannibal, and got the lube from a drawer that was kept there specifically for such occasions. As he turned and saw Hannibal’s broad back, and him lying naked in front of the fireplace, expression serene and vulnerable, Will’s heart squeezed in his chest. Sometimes he thought he loved him so much he wanted to devour him.

Settling down with his knees either side of Hannibal's thighs, Will started slow — with kisses on the back of his neck and under his ears.

"Can you come twice tonight?" Will asked, sending Hannibal into a full-body shiver.

"Will…"

"Once with my tongue buried inside of you, and once on my cock?" Will pushed further. He thrust a bit against Hannibal's lower back, making him feel his hardness.

"Fuck, Will," Hannibal moaned, sticking out his ass more, and burying his face in the soft material of the rug.

"I'll take it as a yes," Will loved to reduce Hannibal to swearing. Hannibal was defenseless against Will's shameless, rude words, and he enjoyed them immensely. There was no higher compliment than taking apart such a composed and reserved man with only his words and barely any touching. But tonight, Will was using his whole arsenal to wreck Hannibal to the very core.

The first time he did it, Will was very surprised at the fact that he enjoyed rimming Hannibal far more than he'd imagined he would. But having him in the most intimate way possible, touching some of the most sensitive parts of him, kissing him and loving him there, and hearing all the delicious noises he made was incredibly arousing even if Will wasn't being touched at all. Now he couldn't get enough. He thought he could do it for hours, reducing Hannibal to an absolute mess, eating him out like a starving man at a feast.

He did start slow, kissing his round cheeks, and then over the rim, teasing him with just the tip of his tongue, loving the way Hannibal's legs trembled in anticipation. Tonight, he really wanted to make him feel all his love to the fullest.

Then he saw Hannibal's hand lying palm up near his hip, and Will reached out to grip it in his own, his thumb stroking over the ring. His fiancé. His soon-to be husband.
Taking a shuddering breath, Will kissed him, teasing at the rim of his hole, stretching it the best he could with only his tongue. The ring of muscles was tight, but Will was licking at him relentlessly, evoking moans that Hannibal was stifling against the rug.

"Come on," he broke off to breathe and command, "Let me hear you."

As he dived back in, Hannibal moaned louder, gripping at his hand so hard it was almost painful. Will resumed his efforts with double force, as he really intended to make Hannibal lose his mind and come on his tongue for the first time that night. He kissed and licked at the muscle until it was swollen and wet from spit, and didn't stop until Hannibal was full-on trembling.

After a while, Hannibal started shoving back into him, cock heavy and pulsing between his thighs, and Will blindly groped for the bottle of lube. He had to break off then, to coat his hand in lube and reach down for Hannibal's cock, stroking him in time with his licks. He started off slowly, then quickened the pace, making sure to jerk Hannibal tight and fast. The

double stimulation was exquisite, judging by Hannibal's desperate noises. It wasn't long before Hannibal was coming all over the rug with a cry of Will's name.

Without stopping at all, Will coated his fingers with even more lube, and started massaging at Hannibal's hole too, stretching him good, and really making him feel it. Hannibal hissed and protested, oversensitive, but Will went slowly and insistently. Now Will knew how to find that special bundle of nerves easily, and how Hannibal enjoyed being teased. Little by little, he caressed it in a maddening, slow rhythm, not enough at all, watching Hannibal squirm and hearing him swear under his breath, as he tried to simultaneously push himself off Will to get some relief, and then back on his fingers, return them to where he really wanted them, buried deep inside himself.

He leaned in to kiss a bit at the rim, just alongside his fingers. Will's mouth was a mess of spit and lube. He could really do this for hours, but Hannibal's full body was honest to god trembling.

"Will, fuck! Please…" he begged, almost sobbing.

"What is it, my love?" Will stopped his torture entirely, and pressed a chaste kiss to Hannibal's ass cheek.

"You, I need you."

"Me?"

"Inside, please. Please, Will."

Hannibal begging was always a sight to behold. Shoulders hunched, head hanging low, sweaty and messy, he was reduced to half-coherent pleading, and Will couldn't deny him anymore.

As he leaned back entirely, he had to squeeze at the base of his own hard, neglected cock at that sight to stave off his orgasm.

"Alright. But not like this. Need to see your face."

Hannibal turned around. There were tears in his eyes, and once again Will was hit fully with a wave of feelings, that deep longing and adoration that always shook him to the very core. Hannibal never closed off around him anymore, and during sex everything was so heightened, Will couldn't help but feel tears well up in his eyes too. Smiling at him warmly, he gently maneuvered Hannibal's legs to go on top of his shoulders, and positioned himself in place. Then the gradually started pressing in his stretched out and reddened hole.

As he hit the spot inside, they cried out at the same time, Hannibal's cock pressed firmly against his stomach, twitching in oversensitivity. His eyebrows were furrowed, he was the picture of debauchery, and Will knew he would remember the expression on his face forever.

As he was inside, he took both of Hannibal's hands in his own, interlacing fingers and gripping tight against the floor. Will went slow, really making Hannibal feel the stretch.

Despite them going at it every day, despite how thoroughly he prepared him, Hannibal was still tight and hot, and Will could feel every inch inside him with his cock. His hips went on their own accord, shoving in and out faster and faster.

“You’re so gorgeous,” he breathed out, half-coherent, “Absolute perfection.”

Hannibal under him — the dangerous killer, completely at his mercy, pliant and warm, enjoying him so much he was breathless and flushed, and absolutely beautiful. He loved to be buried inside of Hannibal, enveloping him everywhere, possessing him, loving him with all of his body.

With inhumane effort, Will slowed down, trying to make this last, and went easy, making sure he hit that spot on every thrust, deliberate and demanding.

“I love you so much,” Will breathed out on every thrust, “I love you.”

“I love you too, Will,” Hannibal echoed his words, meeting his every thrust, as if trying to get him even deeper inside himself. He was gripping both of Will’s hands in his own, holding onto them like a lifeline, and Will loved the feeling of their rings, already so familiar as if they’d been there their whole life.

Will couldn’t help himself, he leaned further down and reached for Hannibal’s lips, meeting him halfway for a passionate kiss, all teeth and tongue, making Hannibal moan into his mouth.

His hips sped up on their own accord, he felt his balls tighten, and a second later his orgasm crashed over him with a violent force. He was spilling deep inside Hannibal, marking him with his hot seed, and crying out his name.

Still breathing hard, Will let go of Hannibal’s hand to grip his cock, and started stroking him hard and fast, drinking in the passionate expressions on his face.

“Come for me, too,” he demanded, and it wasn’t long before Hannibal came all over his hand, his second orgasm even more violent and deep, painting all over Will’s hand and both their stomachs, as Will milked every last drop.

Will let go and collapsed on top of Hannibal, still trying to catch his breath.

“My love,” Hannibal pressed Will’s head closer to him, squeezing him tight, and kissing him everywhere he could reach, “My gorgeous boy. My fiancé.”

They laid like that until Will started to cool down, and shivered. Hannibal got up on one elbow just enough to reach for a blanket from the sofa, and a few more pillows. Neither wanted to leave this cocoon of love in front of the fireplace just yet. They wanted to savor this feeling of closeness forever.

Will sighed, head pressing in the crook between his neck and shoulder, then sprawled his hand on Hannibal’s chest.

His eyes caught sight of the metal on his finger that was shimmering in the soft light of the fireplace. Suddenly he remembered how this evening started.

“You know. There’s one thing I hate about this,” Will said, looking pensively at the ring. He felt Hannibal’s overheated body tense beside himself.

“What?”

“That fucking Freddie Lounds of all people is going to be right about it. We’re really going to be *Murder Husbands*.”

Hannibal laughed, eyes crinkling in delight.

“If you wish, I could kill her and prepare you a wedding feast entirely out of her flesh. She has been awfully rude to us after all.”

“Oh, Hannibal. What kind of husband would I be, if I’d let you do all the work?” Will grinned, and kissed Hannibal again.

Chapter End Notes

And that's it! Thank you so much for reading! Drop a comment if you liked it, authors like nothing more <3 I have other ideas for Hannigram and I hope I'll get to explore them in future stories <3

P.S. A part of the inspiration for the flowers and the robe is how damn good Mr Hugh Dancy looks in red *fanning self*. Just look at this photo and tell me Hannibal won't be completely foaming at the mouth at this:
https://www.pinterest.com/pin/205687907955186409/

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!